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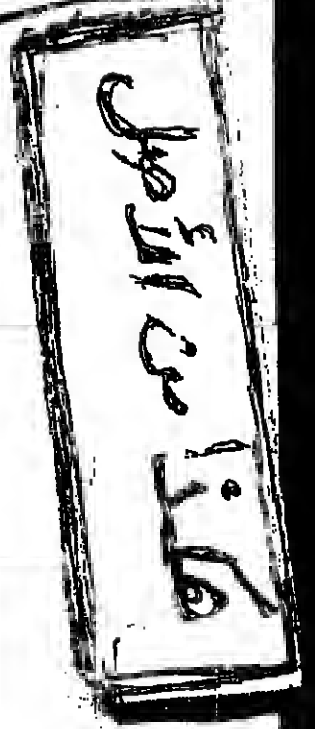


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'The Song of Roland',
Literature on Channel 4,
'Smiley's People'
Mary Douglas: nutritional materialism

David Lodge: the Bible
and literary criticism
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| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Biography 1210 | Ireland 1214 |
| British History 1228 | Medieval Studies 1229 |
| Commentary 1217-19 | Natural History 1216 |
| English Literature 1213 | Philosophy 1230 |
| Fiction 1211, 1231 | Political History 1212 |
| French Literature 1222 | Psychology 1209 |
| German Literature 1221 | Religion 1207-08, 1223-27 |
| | United States 1215 |

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

| | | |
|--|--|------|
| ALLOTT, MIRIAM (Editor) | <i>Essays on Shelley</i> [Iain MacGilchrist] | 1213 |
| ALTER, ROBERT | <i>The Art of Biblical Narrative</i> [David Lodge] | 1207 |
| BAILEY, PAUL | <i>An English Madam: The Life and Work of Cynthia Payne</i> [Lorna Sage] | 1210 |
| BARRETT, C. K. | <i>Essays on Paul. Essays on John</i> [J. L. Houlden] | 1226 |
| BARRETT, DAVID B. | <i>World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World 1900-2000</i> [W. J. Hellenweger] | 1221 |
| BLOCH, MICHAEL | <i>The Duke of Windsor's War</i> [John Origg] | 1222 |
| BROOKS, LESLIE | <i>Faith Never Lost: The Tale of Dissidence in England</i> [David Crane] | 1212 |
| BURGESS, ANTHONY | <i>The End of the World News</i> [Eric Kern] | 1211 |
| CAMPBELL, JAMES, and others | <i>The Anglo-Saxons</i> [Simon Keynes] | 1223 |
| CECKING, J. M. | <i>Proust: Collected Essays on the Writer and his Art</i> [Roger Shattuck] | 1222 |
| COHEN, JEREMY | <i>The Priests and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism</i> [Gordon Leff] | 1208 |
| CEANWELL, JOHN | <i>Earth to Earth: A true story of the lives and violent deaths of a Deven farm family</i> [William Trever] | 1210 |
| COURTWRIGHT, DAVID T. | <i>Dark Paradise: Opium Addiction in America before 1940</i> [Alethea Hayter] | 1209 |
| DELANEY, JOHN J. | <i>Dictionary of Saints</i> [Gerard Irvine] | 1223 |
| DEBRETT, J. DUNCAN M. | <i>The Anastasis: The Resurrection of Jesus as an Historical Event</i> [A. E. Harvey] | 1226 |
| D'ORMESON, JEAN | <i>Mon dernier rêve sera pour vous</i> [Patrick Lindsay Bewles] | 1222 |
| FOARITY, ROBERT S. | <i>The Righteous Remnant: The House of David</i> [Bryan Wilson] | 1223 |
| FOX, JOHN P. | <i>Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis 1931-1938</i> [Paul Kennedy] | 1210 |
| OLASSIS, HENRY | <i>Passing the Time in Ballynecore. Irish Folk History: Folktales from the North</i> [Patricia Craig] | 1214 |
| HALL, SANDI | <i>The Genuflectors</i> [Tracey Warr] | 1221 |
| HEBBLETHWAITE, PETER | <i>Introducing John Paul II: The Populist Pope</i> [David Crane] | 1227 |
| HECTOR, L. C., and HARVEY, BARBARA (Editors) | <i>The Westminster Chronicle 1381-1394</i> [Jeremy Catto] | 1229 |
| HOLMES, PETER | <i>Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics</i> [J. J. Scarisbrick] | 1228 |
| HOOKE, M. D., and WILSON, S. G. (Editors) | <i>Paul and Paulinism: Essays in honour of C. K. Barren</i> [J. L. Houlden] | 1226 |
| HEPS, CHRISTOPHER | <i>Private Pers and Other Tales. A Separate Development</i> [Anthony Dellus] | 1231 |
| JACOBSON, DAN | <i>The Story of the Stories: The Chosen People and its God</i> [David Lodge] | 1207 |
| JENNINGS, PETER, and McCABE, EAMONN | <i>The Pope in Britain</i> [David Crane] | 1227 |
| LANDFORD, LORD | <i>Pope John Paul II: An Authorized Biography</i> [David Crane] | 1228 |
| MACDONALD, NORMAN | <i>James III: A Political Study</i> [G. W. S. Barrow] | 1223 |
| MARTIN, BRIAN | <i>John Henry Newman: His Life and Work</i> [Peter Hebblethwaite] | 1213 |
| MARTIN, PHILIP W. | <i>Byron: A poet before his public</i> [Keith Walker] | 1223 |
| MASON, JOHN HEPE | <i>The Irresistible Diderot</i> [Peter James] | 1229 |
| MAY, ROLAND | <i>Freedom and Destiny</i> [Peter Lomas] | 1231 |
| MINER, VALERIE | <i>Murder in the English Department</i> [Tracey Warr] | 1229 |
| MORRISON, KARL | <i>The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West</i> [Brian Steek] | 1229 |
| MORSEHEAD, IAN | <i>The Life and Murder of Henry Morhead</i> [Dervla Murphy] | 1226 |
| MOULLE, C. F. D. | <i>Essays in New Testament Interpretation</i> [J. L. Houlden] | 1227 |
| The New Sunday Missal | <i>Official Commemorative Edition for the Papal Visit 1982</i> [David Crane] | 1227 |
| NORTH, ELIZABETH | <i>Ancient Enemies</i> [Linda Taylor] | 1221 |
| PHILLIPS, ROGER | <i>Mushrooms and Other Fungi of Great Britain and Europe</i> [Redmond O'Hanlon] | 1216 |
| RYNE, STEPHEN J. | <i>Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire</i> [Mark Abley] | 1215 |
| ST JOHN-STEVENS, NORMAN | <i>Pope John Paul II: His Travels and Mission</i> [David Crane] | 1227 |
| SCHIEFFLER, SAMUEL | <i>The Rejection of Consequentialism: A Philosophical Investigation of the Considerations Underlying Rival Moral Conceptions</i> [Philippa Foot] | 1228 |
| SCHÖNE, ALBRECHT | <i>Götterzeichen, Liebeszauber, Satanskult: Neue Einblicke in alte Geistesgeschichte</i> [S. S. Praver] | 1221 |
| SOMERSET FRY, PLANTAGENET and FIONA | <i>The History of Scotland</i> [Caroline Bingham] | 1229 |
| STERBA, RICHARD F. | <i>Reinforcements of a Viennese Psychoanalyst</i> [Peter Sedgwick] | 1215 |
| WAGNERKNECHT, EDWARD | <i>American Profile 1900-1909</i> [Hugh Brogan] | 1213 |
| WALL, MERVYN | <i>Hermitage</i> [Christopher Hawtree] | 1213 |
| WATERLOW, SARAH | <i>Nature, Change, and Agency in Aristotle's Physics. Passage and Possibility: A Study of Aristotle's Model Concepts</i> [Michael Woods] | 1229 |
| WILSON, A. N. | <i>Wise Virgin</i> [Pat Rogers] | 1211 |
| WORTVLA, KAROL | <i>Collected Poems</i> [David Crane] | 1227 |

COMMENTARY

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|------|
| Exhibitions | <i>Arte Italiana 1960-1982</i> (Hayward Gallery) [Lucy Ellmann] | 1211 |
| Radio | <i>Painting in Naples from Caravaggio to Giordano</i> (Royal Academy) [Jonathan Keates] | 1211 |
| Television | <i>The Song of Roland</i> (BBC Radio) [D. D. R. Owen] | 1211 |
| Television | <i>Sully's People</i> (BBC TV) [T. J. Binyon] | 1211 |
| Theatre | <i>Stephen Fagan: The Hard Shoulder</i> (Hampstead Theatre) [Harold Hobson] | 1211 |
| Behind the lines | [Robert Hewison] | 1211 |
| Author's Author | | 1211 |
| Fifty years on | | 1211 |
| Viewpoint | <i>Confrontation</i> [Mary Douglas] | 1211 |
| Poems by Alan Bleasdale | Charles Boyle, Tom Paulin. | 1211 |
| Letters on Bunkoff | America and the Vietnam War: Gibbon's byproduct. | 1211 |

DAN JACOBSON
The Story of the Stories: The Chosen People and its God
211pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.
0436 22048 2

ROBERT ALTER
The Art of Biblical Narrative
195pp. Allen and Unwin. £10.
04 801022 7

Here are two books about the Bible by two writers whose disciplinary base is secular literature rather than theology or scriptural exegesis. Dan Jacobson is Reader in English at University College London, as well as being a distinguished novelist. Robert Alter is Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. Both authors are Jewish. One might expect their books to have a lot to do with the subject. In fact their approach to the subject is entirely different.

The man who did evil in the eyes of the Lord suffers the punishment of having his own eyes put out; but only after they have witnessed the sight he would most have wished to be spared. Furthermore, through the murder of his own children, the fact that he is to be the very last, the end point, of a long line of such wrongdoing kings, is presented dramatically to him, so to speak, as well as to us, the readers of the tale.

Here, at the very outset of his book, Dan Jacobson comes as near as he ever does to the method of Robert Alter, who delights in drawing out of the biblical texts just such echoes and parallels, which are brought into play by stylistic devices of repetition that may leak, to a critical sensibility schooled in classical rhetoric, like clumsy and primitive redundancy (elegant variation and syntactical subordination could easily rob the description of Zedekiah's punishment of half its force). But in this small example Jacobson sees a key to the ideological microstructure of the Old Testament. It is:

an illustration of that sense of remorseless reciprocity governing the processes of history which seems central to the biblical writers' moral and imaginative life, and hence to the way in which they perceived the world. . . . Every act or condition, in this view, contains within it, and will sooner or later generate, its opposite; every deed and every claim will produce another that will balance it, or invert it, or reverse it. . . .

Again, Jacobson's book is ideological. Alter's recuperative. Jacobson's is directed at the "general reader". Alter's is at the student of literature and/or the Bible. Jacobson writes as an amateur ninking n held fury into intellectual territory already staked out by a formidable body of professional experts; Alter makes a like-over bid for that territory in the name of his own professionalism. Jacobson writes simply, directly, sometimes colloquially, with an effect of sincerity and avoidance of cant that reminds one of George Orwell. Robert Alter writes in the best mode of academic discourse: learned, eloquent, urbane, using technical jargon only when it seems useful and always with careful explanation. Both books are excellent of their kind, and well worth reading. They are not really comparable. Yet they complement each other splendidly and, quite fortuitously, Robert Alter's book provides a kind of response to the challenge posed by Dan Jacobson's.

The challenge is directed at anyone, whether Jew or Christian (but principally the former), who considers that the Bible is in some sense a revelation of religious truth, of the nature of God and man's relation to God. Dan Jacobson is ethnically Jewish, but a non-believer. He starts from the rationalist and materialist assumption that Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, and the role assigned to him in the history of Israel, is a fiction, and his interest is in trying to understand the motivation behind that fiction: why did the Jews make up this story about themselves and Yahweh, and what does it mean? Not what did they think it meant, which is very obvious, but what does it really mean? Never trust the teller, trust the tale!

Don Jacobson cleaves to Lawrence's notion, which is, indeed, a cardinal principle of modern hermeneutics, from Freud and Nietzsche to Lévi-Strauss:

Jacobson begins by citing the sombre account, in 2 Kings, of the evil reign of King Zedekiah, his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, the capture and destruction of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Babylonian exile. Zedekiah's personal fate was particularly horrible. "They slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters, and took him to Babylon." Dan Jacobson's comment on this passage is very acute. He points out that Zedekiah's wickedness has been described, earlier in the same passage, as "he did what was evil in the sight of [literally, "in the eyes of"] the Lord". Thus,

In the introduction to his book, Dan Jacobson explains that his curiosity about its subject was partly inspired by a wish "to understand better some aspects of the great catastrophe that fell upon the Jews of Europe in the 1940s". Though he does not spell it out explicitly, the conclusion he reached seems to be not unlike that which George Steiner recently put into the mouth of the arraigned Adolf Hitler in his novel *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*, namely, that the Jews in a sense provided the conceptual framework which made their persecution possible. Though neither Steiner nor Jacobson implies that this exonerates the rest of humanity from responsibility for the Holocaust, it is a view profoundly shocking and indeed outrageous to orthodox Jewry, and perhaps only a Jewish writer could put it forward without being accused of anti-semitism. (In fact, Steiner has been fiercely attacked by Jewish critics, and no doubt Jacobson will be too.) Dan Jacobson's pessimistic reading of the history of Israel as an endless alternation of injustice perpetrated and injustice suffered has been strikingly reinforced by recent events in the Near East. But it would be misleading to suggest that, because his book is chiefly concerned with Jewish Scripture, its thesis only concerns the Jews. Jacobson sees the same fatal flaw in all ideologies, including some versions of Christianity and Marxism, which incorporate the idea of those who are chosen for a particular destiny, implying the existence of those who are not chosen, who are dispensable. As a South African, Dan Jacobson has personal experience of a Christian sect on whom the Old Testament model of the Chosen People who have made a covenant with God has had a particularly powerful and deplorable effect. And let us not forget that the recent massacre in Beirut, so chillingly reminiscent of an SS Aktion in a Polish ghetto, was, with whatever connivance by the Israeli authorities, actually perpetrated by people identified as "Christians".

The *Story of the Stories* is a brave, forceful, thought-provoking book. But is not its argument, in the last analysis, a little too simple and reductive? Even Dan Jacobson himself seems to think so, and rather disarmingly shares his doubts with the reader in his closing pages. Putting the history of Judaism and Christianity, he asks himself, "Is it possible that these are the stories behind all that movement and passion? How could the evident confusions and legalities of the ever-changing story of the Hebrew Scriptures have had so great an effect on so many people? His explanation is that those who have been affected by the Scriptures read them with faith, whereas he has read them simply "as stories". This he admits is "inadequate", though it is hard to know exactly what is not conceded: amounts to a presumption, a reassertion of the entire argument he has just put forward, but an acknowledgment that those who start from different premises will never agree with him. I don't think, however, that we need accept this limitation.

Having invented a God who will sanction their territorial designs on other people, the Israelites become fearful of the power they themselves have invested in him, and seek to control it by the fiction of a Covenant. But the power cannot be tamed so easily. History being what it is, the Israelites will experience inevitable fluctuations of fortune in random and unpredictable ways, but have condemned themselves to read into these events a terrific weight of moral and metaphysical meaning, of pride and guilt. They become victims of their own historical myth - "that pitiless gain of the people of Israel has to be the loss of another, and vice versa, through all eternity". To escape this double bind, Judaism turned to apocalyptic fantasies of a world of peace and justice ruled over by a benevolent Jewish despotism, but this utopian promise was taken over by Christianity and developed, especially by Paul, in a new "story of the stories" in which the Jews were portrayed as having irredeemably forfeited God's favour by killing his Son - with grim historical consequences that we know all too well.

There is, however, a third position, which Dan Jacobson does not seem to allow for, and that is agnosticism. To acknowledge that religious concepts and propositions are not susceptible of scientific verification or falsification does not necessarily entail dismissing their claims to truth and value. Agnosticism maintains (or may choose to do so) a respectful humility before the transcendental world whose existence it doubts, and therefore provides a more constructive frame of mind than atheism in which to approach the Scriptures (I think, for instance, of Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*). And I would venture to suggest that if belief itself, whether Jewish or Christian, Muslim or Marxist, does not have within it an element of agnosticism, the end result is likely to be fanaticism and intolerance.

At the beginning of his study, Dan Jacobson puts his cards on the table: "If Yahweh is a human creation, as I believe him to be, then his actions and the utterances ascribed to him in his dealings with his people must reveal needs and fears which his creators could express in no other way." Jacobson's premises are atheistic and materialist. He is perfectly entitled to adopt this philosophical position, but two things must be said about it in the present context: (1) when applied to a discourse posited on the existence of God it will inevitably have a reductive and negative effect on interpretation; (2) it is just as much an assertion, and just as impossible to prove, as its opposite.

There is, however, a third position, which Dan Jacobson does not seem to allow for, and that is agnosticism. To acknowledge that religious concepts and propositions are not susceptible of scientific verification or falsification does not necessarily entail dismissing their claims to truth and value. Agnosticism maintains (or may choose to do so) a respectful humility before the transcendental world whose existence it doubts, and therefore provides a more constructive frame of mind than atheism in which to approach the Scriptures (I think, for instance, of Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*). And I would venture to suggest that if belief itself, whether Jewish or Christian, Muslim or Marxist, does not have within it an element of agnosticism, the end result is likely to be fanaticism and intolerance.

Dan Jacobson's opposition between atheism and religious belief, with nothing in between, is paralleled by an equally exclusive generic opposition implied in his book between history (which is plotless and established by a positivist science) and "story" (which is fictitious and the displaced expression of human desire and anxiety). Modern literary theory, however, has tended to see these ways of representing human action as two ends of the same continuum, with many gradations in between, rather than mutually exclusive and irreconcilable discourses. And one of the key points made by Alter is that the Old Testament narratives are a complex interweaving of fiction and history. He acknowledges, here, a debt to Herbert Schneider's *Sacred Discontent*, 1977, which speaks of the Bible as "historicized prose fiction", and

contrasts its essentially linear, causal, prosaic account of the history of the Israelites with the cyclical, analogical, mythopoetic character of most comparable writings of the ancient world - a view, aptly summarized in the Jakobsonian (not Jacobsonian) formula: "Where myth is hypotactic metaphors, the Bible is paratactic metonymies."

Dan Jacobson, who is arguing precisely the opposite case - that the Old Testament constitutes a total "myth" - would no doubt retort that the prophetic books are saturated with metaphor. And so they are. When one turns to the narrative passages of the Old Testament, however, Schneider's typification is more obviously persuasive. The description of Zedekiah's punishment is a good example: "they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah. . . . The lines have what Dan Jacobson rightly describes as "in certain punning quality". The first occurrence of *eyes* is a metonymy (the organ of sight standing for the faculty of sight), the second is literal; and it is the paratactic syntax (linking two grammatically equivalent clauses together by the conjunction "and" instead of subordinating one to the other in a hypotactic structure) that makes us apprehend the enunciation between the two with a sickening force. Heightened expression is achieved without disrupting spatio-temporal continuity.

Alter is not a structuralist, and is somewhat suspicious of Schneider's schematic formula. But he certainly thinks it is pointing in the right direction. It is, he says, "peculiar, and culturally significant, that among ancient peoples only Israel should have chosen to cast its sacred national traditions in prose", and he agrees that the Old Testament is characterized by a complex fusion of fiction and history.

Under scrutiny, biblical narrative generally proves to be either fiction laying claim to a place in the chain of causation and the realm of moral consequentiality that belongs to history, as in the primeval history, the tales of the Patriarchs and much of the Exodus story, and the account of the early Conquest, or history given the imaginative definition of fiction, as in most of the narratives from the period of Judges onward.

It was precisely this fusion of historical verisimilitude with the

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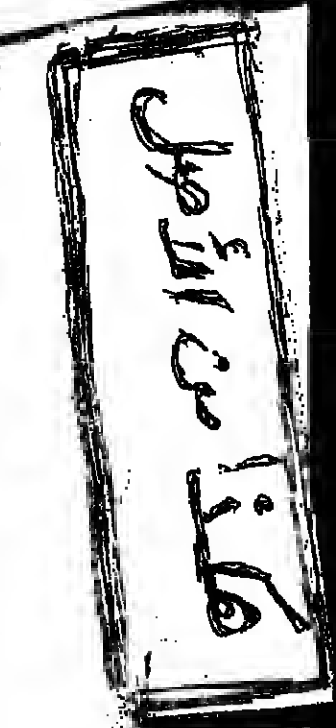
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psychological interiority and thematic patterning licensed by fiction that made the novel the dominant literary mode of the modern era. The biblical authors were among the pioneers of prose fiction in the Western tradition. Robert Alter claims, and in his explanations they often seem very modern indeed – as slaves to the possibilities of “spatial form” as Flaubert, as cunning in the manipulation of “point of view” as Henry James, as adept in the strategies of the “non-fiction novel” as Mailer or Capote. Applying a sophisticated critical sense sharpened on such literature, Alter finds expressive subtleties where conventional biblical scholarship finds only cruxes.

Take, for example, the story about Judah, the brother of Joseph, and his daughter-in-law, Tamar, which is interpolated in the middle of the story of Joseph himself, just after he is sold into slavery. This describes how the twice-widowed Tamar is deceived by Judah her right to marry his third and youngest son, but gets satisfaction by posing as a prostitute and getting herself pregnant by Judah himself (thus bearing twins, one of whom will be the progenitor of David). Biblical commentators have been able to see no point in the embedding of this story in the middle of the Joseph story, but Alter demonstrates elegantly how one story mirrors the other, the deceiver Judah (who connived at the deception of Jacob regarding the fate of Joseph) being himself deceived, and his acknowledgment of this piece of poetic justice being forced upon him by a recognition of his own seal, cord and staff, which Tamar had extracted from him as a pledge of payment for her sexual services, just as the deception of his father was brought about by inviting him to recognize (the same verb is used in both stories) the bloodied coat of Joseph.

Gordon Leff

JEREMY COHEN

The Frisars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism 301pp. Cornell University Press. £17.00/£14.1406 7

The position of the Jews in medieval society was peculiarly anomalous. Unlike the other main infidels – the Muslims – who, except for a time in Spain, were an external presence, the Jews lived within an exclusively Christian society. Unlike the different heretical groups, apart from the Cathars, they had not apostasized from Christianity orthodoxy but challenged it by adhering to a different interpretation of the Old Testament. Unlike the Muslims and heretics they played a crucial part in commercial life, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and nowhere more than as financiers to kings and princes through their very immunity from Christian sanctions. The Jews were thus particularly vulnerable both religiously and economically and the object of continuing hostility. But it was only in the thirteenth century that there came to be an attack upon their existence as a separate community, both from the Church and by temporal powers. They were condemned by popes, hunted by the Inquisition, their books burned, and, finally, beginning in England in 1290, they were expelled from some of the main kingdoms of Western Europe over the next 250 years.

Jeremy Cohen's book is concerned to trace the causes of these developments. He sees the necessary conditions in the growth of religious and political self-consciousness bringing a new emphasis upon unity and exclusiveness both within the Church and the developing states of the Middle Ages. That increased the pressure to conform and intolerance of deviant ideas and groups, which, in the case of the Jews, was accentuated by economic resentment from the new rising urban middle class. Hence the tolerance which they had long received from the Church and the special protection afforded them by nobles in their own self-interest, were undermined. But it was the new mendicant Dominican and Franciscan friars, drawn largely from the members of the urban middle class, who, according to Cohen, gave direct expression to these new tendencies. They were main agents in developing the medieval Christian awareness of the Jews as “mortal enemies”.

Newly founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century, these orders “engaged in a concerted effort to undermine the religious freedom and physical security of the medieval Jewish community”. They did so as preachers, missionaries, disputants, polemists, and inquisitors and itinerant preachers. This book provides an analysis of these roles by means of

I am not suggesting that here we have a simple answer to the questions raised by Jacobson. Both books have a built-in bias. If Jacobson's is a somewhat blinkered positivism, which can see no gradations between fact and fiction, Alter's is perhaps the complicity to which all of us who practise explication literary criticism are prone – the assumption that when we have demonstrated pattern, coherence, richness of meaning in a text, we have done all that needs to be done, and somehow rendered it incapable of doing harm in the world. The idea of the Chosen People, whether Jewish or Christian or other, is a difficult and dangerous concept, whose historical consequences have been on the whole pretty disastrous. Robert Alter contributes nothing to the understanding of this particular problem because he does not address himself directly to it. What he does show, and what Dan Jacobson half-concedes in the remark quoted above, is that to detach the overarching story of the Chosen People from the innumerable stories in which it is set against the complex and unpredictable play of individual choice and fortune, is to misrepresent the Bible and what it contributes to the sum of human wisdom.

From conversion to expulsion

Cohen also believes that the decisive change came in 1240 when, in response to the promptings of a Jewish convert to Christianity, Nicholas Dolin, Pope Gregory IX decreed the suppression and burning of the Jewish Talmud. Only St Louis, King of France, at the time compiled and then only after a public disputation between Dolin and the Rabbi of Paris. (The number of books finally burned in 1242 of between 10,000 and 12,000 seems incredible.)

Those events inaugurated, according to Cohen, a new attitude towards the Jews which was intensified over the next century, largely under the aegis of the friars in those multiple roles already mentioned. Doctrinally, the change consisted in the suppression of what Cohen calls the traditional Augustinian attitude to the Jews, which had seen them as witnesses to the truth of God's prophecies and so as necessary to his designs; despite all their impieties, for which God had punished them, they must therefore be tolerated. The new approach heralded in the events of the 1240s henceforth denied the Jews legitimacy on the grounds that, by refusing to accept the fulfilment in the New Testament of the prophecies of the Old Testament, they had forsaken the latter, belief in which had been their justification. In its place they had put the post-biblical teachings and commentaries of the rabbis contained in the Talmud, which justified their rejection of Christ as Messiah and the other articles of Christian faith. Through the Talmud they were therefore guilty of blasphemy. The Talmud now became the main object of Christian anti-Jewish activity, in the words of Gregory IX's decretal “the chief article which holds the Jews obstinate in their perfidy”. Practically, the 1240s inaugurated the burning and burning of the Talmud, forced disputations involving Jews, and sermons delivered on Christian doctrines in their synagogues.

Cohen follows these developments until the time of the Black Death, in the middle of the fourteenth century, through individuals such as Raymond of Peñaforte, Nicholas of Lyre, and a few of the more notable inquisitors and preachers. By then there were no Jews in England and France, among other countries, and a dwindling number elsewhere. Against whom to proceed. But the polemic continued in what was to be a continuing history of anti-Semitism.

Despite the careful documentation of its individual studies and the generally balanced assessment of the evidence, doubts about this book's approach remain. To begin with, apart from its introduction and substantial conclusions, it is concerned with specific individuals and events. Of the figures examined, only Raymond of Peñaforte can be regarded as a truly representative and prominent member of the order. It is true that the missionary

shared by others discussed by Cohen. But, of those, Raymond Lull, for all his fame, was an aberrant. Yet he and the other subjects of the book are repeatedly taken as the spokesmen for their order and as the expression of a particular development. Thus Nicholas of Lyre is made to reflect the growing acceptance in clerical and scholarly circles of the new anti-Jewish attitude which Cohen discerns in his writings. But it is just that evidence that such an attitude had now “successfully entered the academic community” and was “rapidly gaining ground among the most prominent friars” which is wanting. Nor is it immediately clear where it would be found among the main Franciscans, obsessed by the issue of absolute poverty, or the Dominican scholars pursuing the classics and new ways in theology. Again, the structure of the book assumes a causal progression of anti-Judaism into its different subjects, so that Raymond Lull is seen as the natural outcome of Raymond of Peñaforte. But how many others advocated Lull's measures? Moreover, in their programme to convert the Jews and Arabs by reason, they were both anticipated by Alan of Lille a century earlier.

A similar tendency to treat premises as conclusions is to be seen in Cohen's criteria for judging significance and meaning. The most egregious case is his habit of treating conversion as synonymous with expiation and to compound the error by concluding from a particular writer such as Raymond Lull or Nicholas of Lyre that he was advocating a Europe without Jews. That could have been so; but it first has to be proved. And what does one say about Christ or Augustine who both believed in conversion? So did Joachim of Fiore – and the Joachims – cited by Cohen as evidence of growing anti-Judaism. But if an earlier theologian can say that the Jews will be converted at the end of the world, why not after 1240, as Peter John Olivi and many of the Franciscan spirituals did, without implying their extermination? A further complication in Joachim's case is that he wrote forty years before the change that came in the 1240s.

Another problem posed by Cohen's book is how to measure degrees of anti-Judaism. Because the twelfth-century writers whom he treats did not systematically invoke the Talmud as the source of Jewish perfidy, he does not regard them as the same threat to the Jews that the friars became. But in vehemently cited in Cohen's pages surpasses the denunciations of Peter the Venerable to the twelfth century. Are they any less anti-Jewish or less calculated to incite hostility? At the same time, Peter Alphonsus came close as any later friar to advocating the physical destruction of the Jews in his appeal to the French king, Louis IX, to turn to the Jews in his own kingdom before going to fight the infidels. Nor is it self-evident that what Cohen calls the “stagnant” view of the

more direct arguments developed by the friars in their disputations and analysis of Jewish texts. Greater sophistication is not the same thing as greater hostility. And stereotypes and abstractions often make the best targets.

There is also the practical consideration. It is undeniable that the friars, through the Inquisition (though its activities were more restricted than Cohen indicates) and their missionary vocation, helped to systematize opposition to the Jews and doubled helped to influence both popes and temporal rulers. But physical attacks upon the Jews, as Cohen says, long antedated those developments. Since the pogroms which accompanied the First Crusade occurred in the time of the Augustinian doctrine, it may be wondered whether the friars did more than articulate a continuing legacy, rather than formulate a new programme of destruction.

Finally there is the book's perspective. Cohen commendably refrains from claiming a causal relationship between the friars and the growing exclusion of the Jews from Christian society. He sees them rather as the catalyst which fused these different tendencies to exclusion earlier mentioned. That does not entail, however, embracing the questionable view that the friars were the representatives of some new middle class “who accorded legitimacy to the commercial and profit economy of the new towns”. Neither order is intelligible in such terms. Far from legitimizing wealth and profit they both arose from the renunciation of all worldly goods, however much they subsequently modified their original commitment to a life of poverty. Nor is the intellectual history of the thirteenth century any more intelligible from Cohen's contention that the friars were hostile to Aristotle and doctrinal innovation.

Rather than see the friars as the bearers of some new representative middle-class spirit which engaged them in the programme for the extermination of the Jews, fewer demands would be put upon credulity if we were asked to regard their anti-Jewish activities as one aspect of their apostolic zeal, embracing both believers and unbelievers. That involved them with Jews initially, as Professor Cohen says, only fortuitously – as it did with the Muslims and heretics, but hardly as part of a grand design which this book suggests.

Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages Edited and translated by Raymond Maccoby (245pp. £15.00/£10.95) University Press. £15.00/£10.95



A woodcut of 1492 showing the alleged desecration of the Christian Host by Jews: reproduced from *The Sacred Executioner: Human Sacrifice and the Legacy of Guilt* by Hyam Maccoby (208pp. Thomas and Hudson. £10.95. 0 500 01281 4) to be reviewed in a later issue of the TLS.

At the master class

Peter Sedgwick

Reminiscences of a Viennese Psychoanalyst Richard S. Sterba 184pp. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. \$17.50. 0 8143 1716 2

Richard Sterba was an important figure within “the second wave” of Freud's class associates in the foundation of institutionalized psychoanalysis in Vienna during the 1920s and early 1930s. He was also in frequent contact with the Freudian “old guard” of analysts like Otto Rank, Paul Federn, Theodor Reik, Helene and Erik Deutsch. Sterba points out that most of this earlier vanguard had undergone little or nothing in the way of a personal “training analysis”. Within the second wave who, in a half-mockery of their elders, called themselves the “Kinderseminar” of psychoanalysis, Sterba seems to have been particularly close to Wilhelm Reich, with whom he collaborated in the establishment of Vienna's outpatient clinic for psychoanalytic treatment (open to patients without fee) as a means to pay for their therapy and, at least at first, by the city's Social-Democratic administration. Heinz Hartmann, the psychoanalytic methodologist, whose work Sterba observed to be oddly lacking in support from clinical material, Edward and Grete Bibring, Otto Fenichel, René Spitz, and Anna Freud, who acted as a link between the developing ideas of her father and the psychoanalytic generation of the 1930s.

The rivalry between the older

generation and the Kinderseminar was such that Richard Sterba's own training-analysis, a member of the senior group, forbade him to attend the latter's meetings, which were deemed to be too “unofficial”. But within the councils of the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society, as well as in the international transactions of the Freudian therapists, older and younger adherents of the creed met and talked in relative freedom. Freud remained above these hostile undercurrents and, immobilized by cancer, attended only two meetings in 1926 as well as participating in some less formal sessions where he addressed a number of striking comments to Reik, Reich and Sterba himself. Sterba's notes on these impromptu interventions, on topics crucially important in the comprehension of psychoanalytic concepts, are among the most valuable features of the present memoir.

The younger members of the Vienna Society were, unlike the “old guard”, highly malleable and received Freud's theoretical innovations of the 1920s without resistance. (The break between Freud and the still older series of collaborators, Adler, Jung and Stekel, was of course by now a matter of ancient history to both camps.) Freud's theory, developed after the First World War, that human aggression is a drive in its own right, not merely a reaction to the frustration of libido, became (on Sterba's showing) an acceptable or at least a tolerable tenet within the Vienna group – though it was not accepted by a vociferous opposition led by the Marxist-inclined Reich. Again, in 1923, Freud proposed, in a radical departure, that the ego, far from being simply synonymous with the conscious and orderly conscious structure of the mind itself possessed deeply un-

conscious elements, and in 1926 he raised fresh and important ideas about the role of anxiety in neurotic conflict, anxiety now being considered as a danger-signal, motivating the ego to repress noxious instinctual strivings, rather than as the simple transformation of libido through repression.

Freud's replacement of the “transformation” theory of the nature of anxiety by the new “signal” theory of anxiety-generation has now become part of the common stock of Freudian ideas. The emphasis on ego-conflicts at the expense of the old monopoly of libido has also become an established development in the canon, despite the objections of Adorno, Marcuse and (more recently) Russell Jacoby to the deplorable loss of subversive once the lustful libido is downgraded in favour of that more reasonable moderator, the ego. Whatever the validity of these different contentions, it is clear that Freud's younger colleagues of the 1920s were able to make use of their master's latest ideas in a fairly productive manner.

But the appeal of *Reminiscences of a Viennese Psychoanalyst* does not depend at all on the reader's acceptance of this or that Freudian hypothesis about the psyche. It is above all an attractive human document, replete with pen-portraits and a sheaf of photographs of well-known psychoanalytic personages. One is struck by the number of independent women who came to the fore in the 1920s: Helene Deutsch, Annie Reich, Anna Freud, Grete Bibring, Marie Bonaparte and Editha Sterba. Apart from Reich, the socially progressive wing of the society is also well drawn and at the same time the compromises made by leading Berlin psychoanalysts with the Third Reich

after 1933 are clearly shown. In bidding farewell, during 1936, to the hapless German opportunist who managed the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute during its absorption by the Nazi régime, Freud sardonically instructed him: “You may make all kinds of sacrifices, but you must not make any concessions.” The concessions to Nazism had already been made, with the collaboration of Freud's old rival C. G. Jung, and the sacrifices, in Vienna as in Berlin, became part of an involuntary holocaust.

One is left with a slight unease that the proceedings of the Vienna Society were dominated by a provisional alliance with a much more organic and impersonal medicine. Several of the leading analysts were beholden to the organicist Professor of Psychiatry in Vienna at the time, Wagner von Juregg, whose massive use of electric

Benefits of hardship

Peter Lomas

ROLLO MAY

Freedom and Destiny 288pp. Norton. £10.50. 0 393 01477 0

Psychoanalysts have a tendency to come out from the consulting room and make large pronouncements on the condition of man. A cynic may conclude that, softened by a captive audience for their views on life, they overestimate their wisdom and originality; or that psychoanalysts are by nature preachers in disguise. More charitably, however, we may also conclude that, faced daily with people who are desperately searching for meaning, they are themselves forced to think hard about it, and they then write books as a consequence of their deliberations. This must especially be true of those, like Rollo May, who openly insist that (contrary to the belief of many practitioners) psychotherapy is concerned with morality rather than with science. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. How well does the author, who has no claim to special gifts or to philosophical training, emerge from this exploration into human destiny?

Rollo May is one of a group of American psychoanalysts (which includes Abraham Maslow, Victor Frankl and Leslie Farber), often referred to as Existential Psychoanalysts, who draw their intellectual inspiration from Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich and Blinzwanger, among others. They depart from Freud in their belief that his work was limited by a nineteenth-century view of man as a mechanism, and his failure to recognize that anxiety is a natural response to the horror of life and the fact of death, and should therefore be accepted as such rather than analysed as a neurotic defence against sexual and other conflicts. It is a line of thought which has brought much common sense to the field of psychoanalysis and has helped to counteract the intellectual biases which Freud brought to his findings. Some of these ideas have now found their way into mainstream psychoanalytic practice but without any recognition that their acceptance requires a fundamental change in beliefs.

May appears to be wise, thoughtful, experienced and human, someone to whom one could entrust a sick person with confidence, knowing that he would listen and care and would not indoctrinate or fill his client with jargon. I would stake a bet that he gives good results. Yet there is a disappointingly little in this book about his work. Quotations abound, and are apt and interesting, but they come from philosophers and poets rather than from fellow practitioners. It is perhaps for this reason that the themes on which he dwells – love, will, freedom, death – are subjected to too easy generalization, those familiar with this school of thought will soon feel that they have been here before.

In *Freedom and Destiny* May does, however, attempt that views on

frustration. By “destiny” he refers to the “givens” in life: the limitations to our hopes and ambitions which take precedence over questions of morality. We evade our destiny in our quest. We should accept it (which does not mean sitting back passively to await a predetermined fate) rather than trucking down the imaginary causes of our miseries. This appeal to stoicism is perhaps nearer to Freud's concept of the “reality-principle” than May would care to accept. It is in times of the utmost deprivation, he believes, that we can freely become ourselves and accept our destiny. From suffering comes strength and creativity. He quotes a prisoner in San Quentin gaol, who said:

They have separated me from my family, deprived me of touching my young boy. They have hidden the sun, moon and stars from my view, exchanged their concrete and steel for earth and flowers and everything warm and soft... They have left me with nothing except an inner core, a secret, private place they have not yet found how to get to.

May is undoubtedly right that facing up to and surviving an apparently hopeless position can strengthen our sense of identity. When we hear of those who achieve this task in conditions of terrible hardship we are ourselves inspired. But the implication that hardship is good for us, that it is the means by which we can grow, leaves out of account those – the majority – who do not survive in such conditions, who are broken, crippled or killed. Is there not a danger of romanticizing hardship? Moreover how does May reconcile this line of thought with that of Winnicott, one of the very few psychoanalysts to whom he gives recognition and approval, and who is well known for his belief that it is a “facilitating environment” that promotes creativity in the child and healing in the patient? Should we care our children and our patients or should we knock them for six? The answer, surely, is that such questions are too general, that we need to respond intuitively to each situation. Even so, an emphasis on the value of hardship can very easily lend itself to hypocrisy (the well-heeled politician who believes that the threat of deprivation leads to creativity, should not one ask the belief? But often, just at the point when the questioning becomes interesting, the author passes on to another subject).

Rollo May writes fluently and clearly. There is no trace of the self-indulgent passion for obscurity which evokes some of the leading thinkers in the field of psychoanalysis, who, in recent times, but in spite of the fact that he shows himself to be acquainted with grief and is under no illusion that the world is perfect, his tone is consistently bland. The obvious is stated, too often and we crave, after a while, for something rougher and more spiky. The outrageous comment, the occasional indiscretion, the revealing acknowledgment of frailty, the human touch.

The power of the poppy

Alethea Hayter

DAVID T. COURTWRIGHT

Dark Paradise: Opium Addiction in America before 1940 210pp. Harvard University Press. £11. 0 674 19261 3

“Most impatiently did she await the injection” wrote one physician of a woman, “a female, always exclaiming as I entered – ‘Oh doctor, shoot me quick!’”. This is the typical American opium addict of the 1860s, likely to be a middle-aged middle-class white woman in one of the Southern States, given morphine by her doctor. The opium addict of the 1930s is a New York boy from a broken home, who learned to sniff heroin from a group of other boys before he was in his teens, and a few years later was arrested for financing his habit by selling the drug to others.

The shift in age, sex, class and often colour between the typical nineteenth-century addict and the twentieth-century addict has often been attributed to the introduction of particularly the Harrison Act of 1914 which, as later interpreted by the courts, forbade “maintenance” supplies to addicts, and thus forced them to turn to the black market, and some historians of the period have seen this legislation as a piece of class discrimination against a working-class practice justified by the misery of their condition (a similar suggestion was made recently to relation to British heroin to her *Opium and the People*).

David T. Courtwright will have none of this; his version of American addiction history is different. Supporting his account by detailed statistics, he shows that the great majority of nineteenth-century addicts to opium and morphine was of the middle class. He points out that the great majority of those who became addicts were themselves medical doctors, and that the great majority of those who became addicts were themselves medical doctors, and that the great majority of those who became addicts were themselves medical doctors.

arthritis or syphilis – in the form of opium, by hypodermic injection from the 1860s on. Addiction so caused reached its peak in the 1890s, but already doctors had become aware of the dangers, and by about 1910 iatrogenic addiction was fast disappearing.

Meanwhile a very different type of addict was gradually emerging. From about 1850 Chinese immigrants had introduced opium-smoking in California. These addicts took opium for euphoria, not for health, and it was a social activity, practised in groups, and therefore contagious. Forty years later black stevedores in New Orleans began taking cocaine to strengthen themselves for their back-breaking labour. Opium-smoking and cocaine-taking both spread to white users, generally of the criminal class. Because these habits, and the later opium-smoking, were practised gregariously – unlike the secretive solitary iatrogenic habit of the morphine addicts – this kind of addiction spread as the other sort waned, until it became dominant, and stringent laws against it began to be called for, thus driving it still further underground into “black-market” abysses. “The law did not create the underworld addict, but it did aggravate his behaviour.”

In putting forward this version of American addiction history, Courtwright does not appear to be grinding any particular axe, or propounding one type of addiction more than another. He mentions at the outset that he himself is in favour of some form of legal supply of drugs, but that is not the concern of this book, which is to put the record straight, to provide accurate historical data on which future decisions about addiction legislation and treatment might be based. Courtwright does not believe that any type of para-pharmaceutical is more prone to addiction than any other; ease of access to opiates, not the character of those who have recourse to them, is the determining cause. His main contention, supported by formidable arrays of tables and graphs, is that the “medical” and “legal” American addiction and legislation about addiction are based on a faulty assumption. He argues that the “medical” and “legal” American addiction and legislation about addiction are based on a faulty assumption. He argues that the “medical” and “legal” American addiction and legislation about addiction are based on a faulty assumption.

Josephine

Client relationships

Lorna Sage

PAUL BAILEY

An English Madam: The Life and Work of Cynthia Payne
160pp, with black-and-white photographs. Cape. £7.50.
0 224 02037 4

"Madame Cyn" shouted the headlines: "luncheon vouchers", "Stratham". It was somehow obvious from the start that Cynthia Payne's "disorderly house" was not the usual kind: that it was, on the contrary, bizarrely orderly. As details of Cynthia's domestic economy emerged the curious subculture of "Cranmore" looked, in fact, so exactly an inversion of the banalities of middle-class existence that legal outrage seemed absurd. It wasn't just a matter of the 10p and 15p vouchers clinked by the queue of middle-aged-to-elderly clients on the stairs (though these puzzled the police); nor of the clients' own professions - church, civil service, politics, the bar. As Cynthia's trial and appeal (plus her recent confessions in the *News of the World*) have revealed, her Stratham brothel was not a house but a home, a place where the repressions of everyday life were reflected in a fun-house mirror. And she herself was that most English of institutions, a "character". Hence Paul Bailey's splendid study, *An English Madam*, which removes Cynthia (with her willing cooperation) out of the commercial underworld, and installs her in a niche in the Dickensian tradition of social fantasy.

There is after all, Mr Bailey insists, a certain similarity between Cynthia's role and that of, say, Mrs. Totters in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. She is the landlady as comic genius loci, the "hostess" restored to maternal dignity. Consider the management skills involved: the house, for instance, was cleaned by "Philip", who paid Cynthia a modest sum to stand over him with a switch and a can of lather (he always accidentally missed a tiny corner. Roughly the same arrangement, with "Rodney", took care of the large garden. Drinks were served by the ex-Squadron leader, disguised as the butler or (judging from his photograph) Theda Bara as the mood took him. Sometimes a noted political commentator helped out as "Teeney", and was spanked by Theda Bara for answering back. "Gregory" provided an advice-sheet on the apparatus of domination ("WIG: as most dominants are blonde, a platinum wig or hairpiece worn to show below the helmet, is stated"). Once, the bank manager, a difficult customer who could never be humiliated enough, was brought to the verge of ecstasy when pined with the contents of the Hoover, which Philip had been warned to fill to bursting. More conventional clients watched blue movies, and "went upstairs" when they felt like it. The party atmosphere was maintained by a system of paying (£25) on entry (hence the famous vouchers), with discounts for pensioners and the impecunious.

It all sounds like an inspired experiment in energy saving, with Cynthia ("Lady Dominant" as she was known to the help) though the Squadron Leader, an old friend, called her "Madam Baloney" orchestrating the follies like a benevolent deity. The carnival spirit however, depended - as a carnival spirit tends to - on the conviction, shared by Cynthia and her party-goers, that the world outside Cranmore was an alien, bleak, unaccommodating place. If Mr Bailey's instincts as a writer lead him back to the nineteenth century it must have been partly because Cranmore was a kind of time-machine, a refuge from the present where, for example, second children were catered for (in quite very Dickensian), and where it was taken for granted that your little ways and wants might be entirely out of sync with the greyish person who'd "settled down" in "guy-rat" old. It's not exactly that the set-up resembles a Victorian comedy of humours: a lot of the time it is, and the intensity of the illusion is a measure of the futuristic bleakness, to Cranmoriens, of the supposedly permissive society. What they wanted was the delicious naffness - sneaking in their socks, with tickets,

poached eggs on toast afterwards - of living in the past, not necessarily their own past, though some of the fantasies are very specific, but a collective daydream of early life.

Cynthia understood all this so well, apparently, because her own early life (in fact, her first thirty-odd years) had been fairly unrelievedly awful. As the book's hilarious account of the historic police raid modulates into the story of her experiences before she found her vocation and acquired her house, the party atmosphere is rapidly dissipated. In many ways we still seem to be in the nineteenth century, but now the ambience is less English, more Maupassant, Cynthia's mother died young, in 1943, and her father, whom she and her sister hardly knew (he'd been a hairdresser on the cruise liners) wasn't well-equipped to cope alone, though he had to, since potential second wives found him girls too difficult, and his own conscious respectability cut him off from the sort of surrounding support his working-class background might have provided. Each sister reacted in her own way - Cynthia "ran wild", used bad language, and displayed a generous curiosity about sex. Melanie became sensible and "posh" (and married a police inspector). As "Cinders" drifted away from home on the south-east coast and into London (failed hairdresser, waitress, unmarried mother) she seems, by her own account, to have lost control of her life with frightening speed. She semi-starved for a season in a slum basement with a derelict who "looked like Christie", though all he did was, harmlessly, to collect other social casualties into a family of sorts. Her men seem to have been either father-substitutes (though penniless and inept) or only managed one "sugar daddy" or "sexy spiv" like "Sam", who worked in the amusement arcade, and got her pregnant with nightmarish regularity.

This is a twilight world of female drudgery (unintended pregnancies, of mar-c-or-ried children (far her first son she arranged fostering, her second was adopted), of abortions and sexual fear. Only as she nears her destiny as a Madam does Cynthia seem to be a person at all. Indeed, she never is quite at home; she moves from un-

person to personage (via a short and unpleasant spell on the game herself) in a most disconcerting fashion. As a casualty of family life, and an exile from it, she is a self-made expert in the weird, nostalgic fantasies about domesticity that set the tone at Cranmore. Perhaps the point is made most painfully and absurdly when her long-estranged father, lonelier than ever, and now an old man, becomes one of her party-goers, and joins the queue on the stairs. This is, in a way, Cynthia's moment of triumph, the closing of the magic circle. She provides the home from home, a haven for refugees from the respectable world she couldn't live in, and becomes herself a motherless Mother Superior. (House rules excluded men under forty - "Old men are more appreciative" - and her "girls" were chosen because they did it for love as well as money.)

And so we return to the domain of Madam Baloney, the hilarity by now slightly shadowed, the humour blacker. Cynthia has preserved letters from her clients specifying their wants, and a selection of the most picturesque of these forms the funniest part of the book. A methodical diplomat describes in enormous detail how the lady of his dreams ("aged 38-46 if possible, and preferably English (including Jewish), otherwise European, blonde or brunette") is to create the precise quality that turns him on: "a very strong, natural odour coming through her blouse from under her arms". After instructions about not washing and so on, he continues:

My request is really quite a simple one and not really all that demanding, if you consider that less than 100 years ago, when ladies seldom took a bath and scent was too costly for most people to afford, it was considered perfectly normal for ladies to smell of "B.O."

And he hints darkly at tortures of the damned on the rush-hour tube at a hot summer's evening. Others are briefer, and perhaps less sincere:

Honoured Partygoer, Can you supply a nun at your next shindig? Severe face and Irish accent for preference.

Yours beatifically, "Decameron George"

What they all have in common is

In hot blood

William Trevor

JOHN CORNWELL

Earth to Earth: A true story of the lives and violent deaths of a Devon farming family
174pp. Allen Lane. £7.95.
0 7139 1045 3

For many generations the Luxtons had farmed near the village of Winkleigh in Devon, a proud yeoman family who went regularly to church and thrived on hard work. In 1892 the farm at West Chappel was inherited by Robert John Luxton, who married fourteen years later a pretty local girl called Wilma Short. In time children were born - Frances, Robbie and Alan. Wilma had married into the Luxton family hoping to improve herself, to acquire the position in the neighbourhood she felt to be her due. But she soon discovered that she was not to be: social life cost money and money was not something she casually wasted. And she suspected that there was more to it than that: Robert John did not greatly care for people.

Family photographs show a heavily mustached man, with the steady eyes that one a Luxton family trait. Mrs Luxton has the look of a woman whose dowry has not been honoured: Frances (a long-haired and almost beautiful), two boys smile contentedly. All three children seem to work as soon as they could understand their parents' orders. That had always been expected of Luxton children, part of family tradition.

The names of the cows at West Chappel Farm had a cosy domesticity to them, names that had been used over and over again, passed on from one Luxton to the next: Star, Beauty,

Short Horn, Longlegs, One Eye, Dark, Sparky, Stumpy. Long hours were spent in fields called Chubbouse Orchard, Blindfolds, Lower Ley, Chapple Meadow, Garden Close, Chapple Down. Cheese and cream and butter were made, cider apples pressed. The husbandry was good, but old-fashioned. As the years went by, Robert John's mistrust of the world increased. No outsider was welcome far long at Chapple Farm, and when Frances acquired a suitor, Robert John followed the couple about on horseback. A man's sexual appetite did not require a woman's assenting, he insisted: there were less complicated ways of sorting that side of things out. He died in 1939, and his wife never left her bed again. Melancholia had brought her low, and no wonder. By an act of the imagination can her husband have been wholly ana-

Frances, Robbie and Alan took over the farm and ran it as the same determined line. As an economy, they made their own print; and they saved the wallpaper they tore off the walls in case some day, somehow, it might come in useful. Alan became engaged but the engagement had to be broken off when agreement could not be reached as to his share of the farm. Frances travelled a bit and had admirers, but none of these appears to have been encouraged. She took to poking about in the local graveyards, and she became so mean that she would ask for a pair of shoes to be separated so that she might buy one at a time. Her close relationship with Robbie was incestuous.

They were found, all three of them, by a rooster's roundsman one autumn morning, their heads blown off with a shotgun. Alan, who had not known normally since the time of his

longing for that last past, that time before they grew up and became insurance men or vicars or whatever, when women dominated and enveloped them.

Many can only do it when reminded of Nanny ("What a been a naughty boy then?"). Some hanker after housework as the only really exciting thing, like the retired police superintendent who pursues one of Cynthia's "girls" back home to Somerset to clean her oven in the nude, while "Agatha" whips away. "Agatha", in fact, comes dangerously close to enjoying her work: "I thought of all those years washing my husband's socks and underpants, cooking his meals, waiting on him hand and foot, and it suddenly gave me a lovely feeling, punishing that policeman." But this isn't Cynthia's line: she never married, after all, and is more disinterested, "unservingly loyal", indeed, Bailey discovers, the curious notion that the male is the superior of the species. When they left her house, they returned to their dog-eared or pin-striped adult disguises, and (you realize, with a dazed feeling) to running the society we live in.

Paul Bailey, I think, relished his task because he saw in Cranmore's alternative economy a satire on normalcy, and more specifically on the family as an institution. Cynthia provided a place where "earnest obsessiveness" could palelessly (unless they insisted) act out their quirky emendations on the family scenario, and thus unwittingly proclaim (as it turned out) the quiet insanity of English life and manners. The satiric effect is, however, in the end overlaid with a rather different one: a sense that this particular comic subculture is autonomous, endemic, changeless. Cranmore's world reflects remarkably few of the things that are supposed to have happened to relations between the sexes in the last hundred years. Except of course that they can be written about - something Bailey here does marvellously well. For the rest, it's as though the only testimonies to a century of hectic change are rail-an deodorants, Philip's naiver, and assorted electronic gadgets, littering a family mansion still really inhabited by our great-grandfathers in short trousers, or, possibly, skirts.

The blurb informs us that "In one of the most gripping biographies of recent years, rivalling any thriller for its excitement and murder mystery, Ian Marshhead has charted the life of his famous father, who attempted Everest and K2, and died in bizarre circumstances in Maymyo, Burma." If there isn't a low against such three lives had, in any case, been destroyed ages ago, Rabble picked up the gun, shot his sister and then himself. He had become fanatical about the farm and the land and the animals; generation after generation of One Eye and Sparky and Langlegs.

John Cornwell's lively book tells this grim story well. Inbred, introspective, reclusive, the Luxtons were the victims of their forbears, and in the end they defeat their biographer, as he honestly admits. The plot is at once too simple and too complicated, the material so raw, as shadowed with ordinary truth, that light from some other source is necessary to pierce the dark.

Wryly, Mr Cornwell describes the attempt to lay the gallery of Luxton ghosts - a new man at the farm, a party to celebrate the end of something bad. There were hundreds of cars parked along the track up to the farmhouse and a huge bonfire had been made of the last remnants of the Luxtons' firewood, as carefully conserved over the generations. There were coloured lights and lanterns, a barbecue and disco dancing. . . and a trendy vicar.

A fitting end in a way, and yet it seems a pity that apart from this brief, sound, readable book all the Luxtons' extraordinary tale has so far attracted a gang of hungry newspaper reporters, a man who made a thirty-minute film and someone eager to "do a television reconstruction". A Bronie, or a Thomas Hardy would have seized with wonder the drama of this family plight, exploring its confusion through a novelist's curiosity and illuminating both place and people in a work of art.

Cui bono?

Dervla Murphy

IAN MORSEHEAD

The Life and Murder of Henry Morsehead: A True Story from the Days of the Raj
207pp. Cambridge: Oleander Press. £10.50.
0 9008971 76 9

In May 1931 the nine-year-old Ian Morsehead and his brother Hugh, aged ten, were summoned to the Headmaster's study at Harris Hill, Newbury, and informed that their father, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Morsehead, DSO, RE, had been shot dead while riding through the Burmese jungle near Maymyo. Not long before, Hugh and Ian, with their mother Evelyn, their little sister Audrey and two younger brothers had returned to England from Burma, where Henry Morsehead had been appointed Director, Burma Circle, Survey of India.

On May 19, 1931 the *Rangoon Gazette* printed a statement issued by the Commissioner of Police, Mandalay Division: "Various theories have been advanced as to the cause of the murder. It is impossible to say as yet what the real cause is. There is, however, no evidence at all to connect the attack with rebel activity. Two arrests have already been made and a reward of Rs 1,000 has been offered for information leading to the discovery and conviction of the murderer." Eventually the arrested men were released and an August 21 the Government of Burma, through the India Office, Whitehall, reported that "The enquiries led to no result and the authorities are fired to the conclusion that the case must remain a mystery." But this conclusion has never satisfied Ian Morsehead, who believes that there was something additively furtive about the official attitude to his father's murder.

He writes: "Why should someone leading such a very ordinary life be murdered? I puzzled? Who stood to benefit? This uneasy suspicion of justice had not been done eventually it seems - became an obsession with Mr Morsehead. In 1981, fifty years after the event, he returned to India and Burma to seek some plausible motive for his father's murder."

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ACTON

Terminal triptych

Eric Korn

ANTHONY BURGESS

The End of the World News
190pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.
0 09008971 76 9

"Would he had blotted a thousand", said Ben Joonson, and though he meant it in love and honesty (this side history), he gave a weapon to every conflicted or constipated writer, or would-be writer, in the face of the meanish gub of someone else's creative energy. So when Anthony Burgess produces three books in about three months, to say nothing of all these symphonies and operas and a series of lively reviews and who knows what he does in his spare time (his catamans?), acts as economic aid to the government of (Mexico), there is a temptation to say - with Ben - "be flamed with that thing that sometimes it was necessary to be stopped". But I think it is a temptation to tell someone else how best to dispose of his time; and I'd rather have a new Burgess than not have a new Burgess: the man, luckily true, blazes where he lists.

And now we have, to quote the poet, (for Burgess cannot be

Medieval maiden

Pat Rogers

I. N. Wilson

The Virgin
190pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.50.
0 09008971 76 9

Inferno, as adj., says Liddell and Scott, "pale, virgin, pure, chaste". A. N. Wilson's title defines the theme, almost of heaven plays around the concept. The hero, a blind medievalist named Giles Fox, has spent twenty years editing a previously unknown manuscript of the early thirteenth-century *Yvain*. He is aiming at the Early English Text Society, but the narrative comprises instead extracts from a translation said to be published by the 13th-century Press. So even texts endure as a concept or else the writing of a stud. Giles writes in his introduction to the *Treits of Love* that "Christianity inherited a heritage from virginity from the ancients. . . Christ himself belonged to a language group which did not even have a special word for what the Greeks called *parthenos*. . . Love and a concept the poets borrowed from the theologians, and not the other way round." Philology keeps bumping its theology, to Giles's piggish exasperation.

He is middle-aged, twice widowed, has a daughter of seventeen who's "dead" after an East Saxon princess of a sort's reconstruction of the life of a distinguished civil servant and mountaineer in the India of the 1920s. That "dramatic end" must surely qualify as the anti-climax of the year. It consists of no more than a staid bazaar gossip, hinting at a challenge between the author's maiden aunt and Syed Ali, manager of the local Electric Supply Company. There is no proof that Ruth Morsehead ever formed such a relationship, yet Ian Morsehead builds a theory - found solely on a rumour - that Henry Morsehead was murdered by an assassin in the pay of the businessman, Syed Ali.

Mr Marshhead has done an immense amount of research into the life of his courageous and endearing father, who was among the greatest of the early twentieth-century Himalayan explorers and surveyors. But not by research alone do books live. Neither the author nor his father - from whose letters Ian quotes at the great length - shows the faintest glimmer of literary skill; and the result is a book of incomparable oddness. Even the attempt on Everest can sound boring when Henry Morsehead describes it in letters to his adored wife. And the life of Henry and Evelyn, which makes a rare distillation of all that was tedious in British history,

confined within his own covers and "the author himself, who is not all shame, is acting as his own puff" is not one but "three fascinating states bound together". The three separate, or rather separable but interlocked narrative strands reflect "the new way of reading, derived from the new way of watching television. To view one channel at a time is no longer enough". (So if there are signs here and there of reading, derived from the new way of watching television. To view one channel at a time is no longer enough".)

It would be churlish not to continue to refer to Burgess's oblique explication of his own intentions and methods, without stopping to consider the precise anatomical position of his tongue at the time of writing. The three strands are "the same story; they are all about the end of history as man has known it". They also concern the "three greatest events of our century": Freud, Trotsky and Space Travel. (He might, we feel sure, have chosen Einstein, Joyce and Television, or Crick, Castro and Computer Science, and had just as much fun: Joyce, indeed, makes a tangential appearance, refusing a free analysis with Jung in a Zurich cafe, while at the next table Lenin wanders why he

Metropolitan line to Giles's place behind the Angel, Islington, and she has felt only sterile love for a friar in Cambridge. But it turns out she is capable of manipulating texts, if not people, and the typescript which arrives with the General Editor has been tampered with on the way. Corruption has come to seem a good thing, at least a more human thing than the blind dogmatism of incredulity.

Readers of A. N. Wilson's earlier books have sometimes found his vision arbitrary and cruel. Here the problem is partly deflected by investing the cynicism in the central character: Giles Agonistes, eyesless at the Early English mill, perpetually deceived and so perpetually deceived. It is true that there are still the snobbish allusions to Goshop Alstair, the possession of a middle-class house, and lower-middle-class: "They heard the last of *Yvain* and *Beowulf* together as a translation said to be published by the 13th-century Press. So even texts endure as a concept or else the writing of a stud. Giles writes in his introduction to the *Treits of Love* that "Christianity inherited a heritage from virginity from the ancients. . . Christ himself belonged to a language group which did not even have a special word for what the Greeks called *parthenos*. . . Love and a concept the poets borrowed from the theologians, and not the other way round." Philology keeps bumping its theology, to Giles's piggish exasperation.

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hasn't heard from Trotsky recently).

The outermost narrative (issue is a pastiche catastrophe plot; in the not-distant future, when the citizens of the Commonwealth of the Democratic Americas communicate by telepophone and anomic Teupota rampage in the streets, the earth is threatened by the arrival of the wandering planet Lynx (its name a compromise between the rival claimants Marx and Lynch) which is about to drown the coastal lands in thousand-foot tides, set off earthquakes world-wide and abduct the man before swinging around the sun and returning for a second and fatal swipe. Fortunately, the protagonist, Valentine Brodie, a representative of dying humanity as well as dying *la hure* and, as luck will have it, a writer of science fiction (which he calls "scific or fuffic") in order to distress the pedant) is on hand to observe, record and to survive.

Brodie has the misfortune of being married to the aurnologist Vanessa Frame, a woman of awe-inspiring beauty, intelligence, passion and sexual skills; at least awe is what these qualities inspire in him, and so much the worse for him. Vanessa's father initiates a survival project for the scientific élite of -ographers and -ologists deserving of survival; a place is grudgingly made for Brodie as historian but he is boozing in the Bawery with a strolling player when the first waves strike, and is in danger of missing the last bus. While Brodie is leaping about the top stories of skyscrapers, the space-ark or space lifeboat project falls into the hands of the mad despot Bartlett, and his team of "instanumologists", a teasing Burgess calque for "thugs".

For Sigmund Freud, the end of the world takes the form of cancer of the jaw, exile from his loved and hated Vienna, and endless waking and dreaming rumination on past errors or betrayals. Driven out by the Nazis, he is likewise pursued by phantasms; the victims of his panacea, cocaine; the Rat-man and his fellows; the quarrelsome Viennese, the hostile colleagues, Adler, Jung, Stekel, treacherous disciples, castrating sons. Though played for broad comedy and broad pathos - Freud on the platform, two hours before the train, surrounded by squalling children - these episodes are moving, filled with insights, and essentially fair, though many

The third narrative strand, much the slightest, sheds little light on an obscure period of Tratsky's life - his sojourn in New York around 1917. It is presented as the fragmentary libretto of a sort of radical counterpoint in *Springtime for Hitler - Bedtime with Bronstein* perhaps. The lyrics, which will sound wonderful in the stage presentation that Burgess may at this very moment be perfecting, are essentially fair, though many

But sometimes you say goodbye without ever really meaning it: between bouts of love, even in the gap between two words that are themselves harmless as wooden fence posts driven in on either side of an invisible dotted line.

Here, at least there is a river to be crossed in a ferry whose tickets may be paid for in either currency. Women gather in the saloon, comparing their purchases: of better, say, or a roll of imported cloth; that on their own side is heavily taxed; the captain fingers his worry-heads, and the stranger pats the deck between stern and bows and back again, and back again, at last looks up to the daunting gulls and wishes only he had bread to scatter. . . .

Better this than waking in trains to find you have already left without having properly taken account of the last village, village street and weathercock that, even as you watch, begins to turn.

Charles Boyle



Freudians and all Jungians will take offence.

We know what the end is going to be for Freud; but Brodie's fate is full of surprises, farcical concatenations and coincidences and an unloped-for victory for Our Side. The fictionalized Freud, like the fictional Brodie, is a flawed hero, an iron survivor: the one survives his own doubts and death, the other survives the destruction of humanity; a qualified, ambiguous but indisputable triumph.

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Burgess doesn't follow Graham Greene's old practice of distinguishing novels from entertainments: the two functions are inextricably woven, for better or worse, in the rich and riotous utterances of this incomparably energetic prophet and farceur.

Ayamonte/Vila Real

Who has not seen the colours on the last evening strangely intensified and heard the final, untranslatable syllables of the taxi-driver cursing the cyclist? Then lights a cigarette: there'll be time enough to learn what you do, without ever learning enough to do right; nor can you return through the labyrinth - what child's play it seems now! - regathering the thread to the point at which it simply might never have been needed.

But sometimes you say goodbye without ever really meaning it: between bouts of love, even in the gap between two words that are themselves harmless as wooden fence posts driven in on either side of an invisible dotted line.

Here, at least there is a river to be crossed in a ferry whose tickets may be paid for in either currency. Women gather in the saloon, comparing their purchases: of better, say, or a roll of imported cloth; that on their own side is heavily taxed; the captain fingers his worry-heads, and the stranger pats the deck between stern and bows and back again, and back again, at last looks up to the daunting gulls and wishes only he had bread to scatter. . . .

Better this than waking in trains to find you have already left without having properly taken account of the last village, village street and weathercock that, even as you watch, begins to turn.

Charles Boyle

A place to come from

Patricia Craig

HENRY GLASSIE

Passing the Time to Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community. 85pp. £25. 0 86278 015 2

Irish Folk History: Folktales from the North. 161pp. £8. 0 86278 015 0

Dublin: O'Brien Press

"Ballymenone's modest homes stand around me as wondrous revelations of their creators' minds." Henry Glassie writes at one point in his massive study of the habits and habits of a small Ulster community. By this he means that the dwellings he examined in County Fermanagh are constructed in accordance with a practical design and that their internal arrangements reflect certain traditional patterns of living — the kitchen, for example, where neighbours gather, being still the most important room.

The overstatement is typical of Glassie's anthropological method. In the commonest action performed in Ballymenone, he finds cosmic implications. "A text," he tells us (he means the text of a story related in a Ballymenone kitchen), "like a season, like a cell or a lifetime, is a segment of eternity. It exists once as a whole and as part of a larger whole." This is an example of a statement so "meaningful" that it actually means very little. Glassie's book abounds in these.

Considered as a documentary undertaking, however, *Passing the Time* is an impressive piece of work. Henry Glassie has found a great deal to note, record, absorb and relish in his chosen locality. Ballymenone is a rural area in Fermanagh, lying along the western side of Upper Lough Erne, seven miles north and nine miles east of the border with the Republic. It consists of low hills, bogs and scattered townlands. In 1972, when he began his research, Glassie, a professor of folklore at the University of Pennsylvania, counted forty-two households in the district, thirty-three Catholic and nine Protestant. The majority of these gained a livelihood from farming.

Over the next seven years, whenever he was able to visit Ballymenone, Glassie immersed himself thoroughly in the life of the countryside, observing and examining local practices in working the land, constructing farmhouses and outbuildings and "passing the time." "A man standing at an open door would be wasting time, but leaning on the half-door he is just passing time" — this tongue-in-cheek observation, offered to E. Estyn Evans and quoted in his classic study *Irish Folk Ways*, explains his use of the phrase Glassie has chosen for his title. It has to do with finding ways of making time pass fruitfully and agreeably.

Chief among these is the ceil, the gathering of neighbours in a local kitchen for a hour of merry-making, with singing and storytelling well to the fore. This is usually a rough-and-ready affair, full of hater and good humour, with vigorous approval for every performance; when Glassie is present, however, the "entertainment stunts to the transcendence of the community." He makes a "sacred mystery" out of the business of drinking a cup of tea with your neighbours, listening to a comic song or just enjoying the "crack".

The idea that the heart is at the heart of things is not a new one — in old parables, sentimental songs of a type still appreciated in Ballymenone, you were always being adjured to fight for your "heartily and ulcers" — but in Glassie's hands it undergoes an apotheosis. "The one becomes the all at the center," he tells us. And: "Fire centers space, brings common life into time's flow, and burns away categorical disjunction." He explains: "By day it unifies the work of men and women, blending outside work and inside work into food consumed by people seated in a semicircle around the front window or the hearth."

Having been inflamed by the fire, Glassie goes on to make a meal of the kitchen: "Like turf, tea and soap are eaten into life's stream running through the kitchen." Noting the fact that interlarded delph ornaments require frequent washing, he remarks: "As tea is fed guests, soapy water is fed the ancestors."

The people of Ballymenone appear to have borne up well under the strain of having their footsteps dogged by an overwhelmed anthropologist with his sights fixed on infinity. The Flanagan brothers, Hugh Nolan, Ellen Cutler and Michael Boyle, all of them well over seventy and all natives of the district, were Glassie's principal informants, but many other local families, such as the Owens and the Murphys, offered help whenever they could. Ballymenone's storytellers, unlike the *seanchuidhe* of Gaelic-speaking districts, prefer the plain account of a local exploit to the convoluted wonder-tale, though their repertoire includes the doings of the saints (St Patrick, St Columba and so on) as well as some supernatural occurrences, all highly entertaining. (Glassie sometimes makes mistakes in his transcriptions; I do not believe, for example, that Peter Flanagan would have referred to the legendary architect of the Giant's Causeway as Phil McCool, or that the singer of the well-known "Soan O'Farrell" would have inserted a piece of gibberish — "nabosito" — in place of the simple Gaelic term "no bhualadh" — my boy — which occurs in the second line.)

History, to a certain extent, has been preserved orally in the locality; the tale of Black Francis, for example, which Mr Nolan and Mr Flanagan recounted for Glassie, goes back to the period following the Williamite wars at the end of the seventeenth century, when the countryside was swarming with outlaws and rapacious, those dispossessed in earlier confiscations as well as the disbanded soldiers of Sirsfield's army. Among their number was Black Francis, a local hero hanged at Enniskillen, and his associate Soule Corragan of the great leap, who escaped to make his way to America.

Striking achievements like Corragan's jump (he leapt the Sillees River, twenty feet at its narrowest point) form a natural part of Ballymenone's mythology, making onocrotides that, as Glassie has it — for once succinct and shrewd — "celebrate the excellence of the District's people." Mrs Timoney's prodigious trek is another spectacular accomplishment that gets due recognition in the area. Preserved since the nineteenth century and still current, this story upholds the spirit that enabled a hard-pressed widow to walk forty miles to pay her rates, and make nothing of it. Fortitude and hardihood are creditable characteristics. So is belligerence in a good cause. 1829, the year of Catholic Emancipation, is remembered in Ballymenone for a faction fight which took place on Mackan Hill on July 13 (the Twelfth, that year fell on a Sunday). Orangemen's bands and threats. Ballymenone at the time, according to Michael Boyle's account, was "very terribly Protestant populated" — brought a counter-attack from poor Catholics brandishing pitchforks; the latter won the day, with four deaths to their credit (Catholic versions of the story are told in a spirit of commendation for bravery — the Orangemen were armed with guns — and honourable defiance). Those concerned were arrested and sentenced to execution; one was hanged before a revivifying came through. It's a stirring story, and Glassie is always ready to be stirred, and its effects. (Glassie, it is true, distinguishes between two moral neighbours and the bad fanatic, but there is no spokesman for the second type in his book, which perhaps leaves the picture incomplete.)

The author of *Passing the Time* certainly finds much to admire. In the people he is studying, of these, Hugh Nolan, clever, subtle and diffident, and Ellen Cutler, amiable and outgoing, represent the Ballymenone outlook of its most pleasing. (It's neat, but unimportant, that one is Catholic and the other Protestant.) Glassie has missed, though, some traits that are

very little, however, about the intertribe confrontations that brought them there. Indeed, Glassie seems to have found curiously little evidence of political animosity in Ballymenone (perhaps because the bulk of his information is filtered through the consciousness of an older, less hot-headed generation); what he has hearteningly found, as Benedict Kiely did in the Co. Tyrone of his childhood, is that neighbourliness is of more consequence than sectarian affiliation.

The last "historical" event to pass into the district's oral culture is the Brookeborough Raid of 1957 which resulted in the death of two IRA men, Soan South and Feargal O'Hanlon, both subsequently commemorated in hastily composed songs. (A very garbled "Seao South" appears here, in which the singer has simply forgotten his words; it's an incomplete version, not, as Glassie asserts, a version peculiar to the district.) An earlier and more engaging political jingle was recited by Mrs Cutler:

Sir Edward Carson had a cat,
It sat upon the fence,
And every time he fed the cat
It cried out, No Surrender.

Glassie does well to quote this, and he would have done better to let it speak for itself; however, as we might expect, he is quicky on to its deeper import. "Become a follower, the individual becomes a housecat, a kept beast," he solemnly explains. "Shouting slogans, he leaves neighbourliness for bitterness and loses membership in the human community. To be human is to own a soul . . ." So it goes on.

In a place so wot that men once walked about on stilts to keep out of the mud, it's not surprising that the weather should loom large as a topic of conversation, even to the point of providing, in many people's minds, a reflection of current instability and political deadlock. The nineteenth-century Tyrone novelist William Carleton effectively converted weather and landscape into a moral force (especially in *The Black Prophet*), and Fermanagh's Shan Bullock followed suit, bringing in everything dark, rotten and ominous to reinforce a troubled narrative mood. "It was a wet season, full of mists and floods, the hills sodden to the roots, the lowlands dank and blighted," Bullock, incidentally, in his novels of the Lough Erne region (popularized by what he calls "the slow-blooded Loughsiders"), sets out to the clearest possible way the opposing qualities traditionally associated with Protestant and Catholic Ulster — industriousness and fecklessness, wildness and steadiness of behaviour. Upstairs are Catholic, lowlands Protestant. This makes for drama, but it's a form of stereotyping that Glassie sensibly discounts. "Probably," he says of those, not native to South Fermanagh, who dismissed its inhabitants as a lazy lot, "they allowed their prejudices to connect the dominant local religion with a lack of industry." In fact, as he found, the district's rather phlegmatic "way of going on" is efficiently geared to local conditions.

Seamus Heaney in one of his essays quotes Carson McCullers's remark to the effect that in order "to know who you are, you have to have a place to come from"; by this reckoning, the people of Ballymenone ought to be able to count psychological soundness among their attributes — as indeed they can, if you ignore the awkward business of sectarian entrenchment and its effects. (Glassie, it is true, distinguishes between two moral neighbours and the bad fanatic, but there is no spokesman for the second type in his book, which perhaps leaves the picture incomplete.)

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part of Glassie's compendary is the chapter entitled "A Chronicle" which scans the history of the North as it affected South Fermanagh; the author has consulted all the most pertinent sources and uses quotation to excellent effect. Certainly he cannot be accused of skimping his research, or of having failed to carry out his fieldwork intensively (not to say intensely). He cannot control his addiction to the large concept, however, and so we are off again: "History is land is meaning," "the past expands to unconceivable, unknowable wholeness," etc. There is an appropriate rejoinder to all this: "Oh aye."

And Where Do You Stand On The National Question?

"Told him the shortest way to Tara was via Holyhead."
Stephen Dedalus

Apple-blossom, a great spread of it
above our heads.

This blue morning a new visitor
is laid back on a deckchair;
he's civil and clever,
a flirty mandarin
being entertained, like an oxymoron,
in this walled garden.

Two glasses of young wine
... et an mange des asperges.
I imagine him
as the state's intelligence,
a less man in a linen suit
who has come to question me
for picking up a pen
and taking myself a shade seriously.

'Palley's plain tongue, his cult
of Bunyan and blood
in blind dumps like Doagh and Boardmilk —
that's the enemy.'

I've an answer ready in the sun
but my eye times the grass
for a tiny mound of soil:
the mole works underground,
a blind glove

that gropes the earth and cannot love.
'Your Lagan Jacobins, they've gone
with The Northern Star. I've heard
Hewitt and Heaney trace us back
to the Antean weaves —
I can't come from that.'

'Why not, though? I can't there
this local str to us all? —
Flick of the thumb, a word's eelish,
the editorial clink of an accent,
wee lick of spit or loquacity?
I'd call that a brave kindness.'

Then a journey blows back at me —
rust-orange and green,
the Eotoprise scudding north
past the brown burn of whin and bracken
till it halts and waits for clearance
under the gaily villageloo
of a corrie in bandit country.

'That's where the god, Autocthon,
is crossed by the hangman's rope.
He counters with a short flicloo
called *Malyonius's Last Hap*.
'These islands are stepping-stones
to a metropolitan boma.

'An archipelago that's strong
between America and Europa.'
'So you're a band of Orange dandies?
Oscar to Péc-Lachale with a sash on?'
'Well, not exactly . . . that's unfair —
like my saying it's a green mess you're after.'

'I want a form that's classic and secular,
the risen République,
a new song for a new constitution —
wouldn't you rather have that
thao stay loose, baggy and British?
You don't have to fall back
on Buckle and the Ceulser,
on a betty style

and slack o'whozy emotion.'
We hit a pause like a ramp,
shrug and guess time
before we guess the design
of life after Priori:
the last civil servant
is dropping over from Whitehall.

Call him Sir Peregrine Falkland:
he's a bit thick — not a half-lazy
but he'll do the trick.

UNITED STATES

Keeping the home fires burning

Mark Abley

STEPHEN J. PYNE

Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire. 440pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £26. 0 691 08300 2

This bulky, provocative volume is really a trilogy of texts, scrambled order of sequence and arranged like a patchwork quilt. "Mine has been a home-theater task," Stephen Pyne modestly begins. "I have tried to bring fire to history." One part of the trilogy examines fire, its uses and mythology, and offers a detailed regional scrutiny of wildfire (especially forest fire) in the United States. The third part is a history of fire-fighting in rural America, including sections on its equipment, manpower and administration. On the whole Pyne writes briskly and alertly, giving every impression of delight in his labours. He sometimes changes course with alarming speed: a single paragraph that starts by examining man and "other elements of the biota" goes on to focus the statistics of lightning and fire loss; turns back to Volvenc, Zeus and classical curses; wanders away to the South Pacific and the goddess Pele; and finishes by quoting Sir James Frazer on the Druidic worship of wildfire. It is an impressive achievement merely to have assembled all this material; Pyne's footnotes alone run to eighty-three closely-crowded pages. But a number of his conclusions are questionable, to say the least.

Some of the book's most fascinating and controversial sections are those that concentrate on American Indians. Pyne demonstrates convincingly that Indians had discovered numerous functions for fire, among them ceramics, warfare, spectacle, hunting, communication, and the repulsion of biting insects. He is at pains to attack any scholarly misanthropy about the Indians' adaptation to a stable environment, arguing that their frequent burning of the land had widespread results: "it may be said that the general

consequence of the Indian occupation of the New World was to replace forested land with grassland or savannah. . . ." Indian fire certainly produced an enormous expansion of range for the American buffalo, and the distinguished anthropologist Loren Eiseley believed that it might have been an important factor in the geologically recent extinction of American elephants. In an even more striking generalization, Pyne claims that "The virgin forest was not encountered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it was invented in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For this condition Indian fire practices were largely responsible." It is true, and well worth emphasizing, that early explorers and colonists on the east coast of America were often surprised by the similarity of the new continent to the gently wooded landscapes they had left behind. But this by no means tells the whole story. For example, Nicolas de la For, a Spanish explorer in Texas in the mid-eighteenth century, felt oppressed by the "dismal" and "unending" forests of pine and oak, "so tall and thick that in some places it is difficult to see the sky." Pyne's determination to show that the arrival of white settlers was beneficial to American woodland occasionally leads him to absurd lengths: he even speaks of "the forest, an environment that Indians found largely inimicable." Tell that to the Haida or the Creel.

With another sweeping brush-stroke, he declares the idon of wilderness to be "a recent American invention." The European concept of wilderness had traditionally encompassed a sense of barrenness and desolation, sometimes given a religious twist (as in the opening sentence of *The Pilgrim's Progress*), and is a far cry from Thoreau's declaration, "I love the wild not less than the good." Yet Pyne has little sympathy with the environmentalists' approach to American resources. "As an idea and as a political fact," he claims, "wilderness is a human artifact . . . it is the human enterprise, as preserved by the scholar, that gives definition and meaning to wilderness." In short, man is the measure of all things. Pyne treats

with scorn the idea that there could be such a thing in North America as a "pure" fire regime, for even in Alaska the flora has been determined partly by man. In practice he often agrees with contemporary ecologists, especially about the value of wildfires in maintaining the health of an environment; but he begins from very different premises. "Only with romanticism," he insists, "did forest gloom become a desirable commodity." A commodity, like pork or coal, to be sold and cooked.

Behind Pyne's wealth of facts and figures stands a romanticism very much his own: a populist nationalism which demands approval, if not reverence, for the fire behaviour of American settlers. This means, among other things, a willingness to overlook his own evidence; the barrenness of hillsides in much of present-day Maine, for instance, resulted from the eighteenth-century practice of burning out wolf packs from their mountain haunts, a habit that destroyed the meagre soil as well as the animals. Pyne laments the initial dependence of American forestry on European models, for conditions in the two continents were very different, and the US needed to recognize that the fire-free woods of western Europe should not be taken as ideals in its own forest management. (Again playing fast and loose with facts, he asserts that by the end of the nineteenth century "the Great Reclamation had long since transformed the forests of France and Germany into farms and fields. . . .") When the science of forestry was in its infancy in America, it paid particular attention to the prevention of wildfires, a demand that often brought it into conflict with local people. Pyne makes his own position clear: "The real tyranny of technology transfer in this instance was that a self-proclaimed science demanded the repudiation of frontier folkways. Centuries of practical experience painfully and empirically acquired by American settlers in a range of fire regimes was [sic] abruptly sacrificed, only to be rediscovered later."

Again this is far too simple a vision. American professional forestry grew up around the turn of the century,

in the very period when the Great Lakes states were suffering the worst fires in the nation's history (the word "firestorm" originated not in the Second World War, but in the American Midwest in 1871). These fires were the result not only of the arrival of the railway and of logging companies in search of quick profits, but also of farmers who were hungry for cheap land and were happy to use fire to clear it. Pyne admits that only when the virgin timber had been exhausted, and agricultural settlement abandoned, did the great fires subside. The "practical experience" of "frontier folkways" had helped to cause massive destruction. Equally, it may be thanks only to professional foresters that the coastal redwoods of California remain, because the widely accepted combination of brush-burning and logging was proving incompatible with the redwoods' survival. Of course the concept of fire protection existed long before the US Forest Service was born, and in the late nineteenth century individuals and communities did fight fires as well as setting them. But the battles were highly selective. Pyne quoted a Californian of the period who observed, "Wherever land is occupied and fenced, forest fires are feared and fought. . . . But the unoccupied public domain is denuded and blistered with impurity." Perhaps the repudiation of frontier folkways was not such a disastrous thing after all. *Fire in America* records a reluctant, gradual, uneasy realization on the part of Americans that a *laissez-faire* approach to public land was causing it, and that, almost irreparable harm.

For America remains what it has always been: a nation of fire. In the Great Depression, arson became an epidemic in several regions where fire-lighting provided one of the few ways of earning cash; as a result, in 1931 parts of Idaho were placed under martial law, and federal troops had to be despatched to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Even today the rate of death from fire in the US is 400 times greater than that of Britain and an amazing 200 times greater than that of Canada, a country with related patterns of demography and land-use. Fires remain vital, at one level, they always were, for Indians, settlers and the inhabitants of cities alike; a rich source of live entertainment. Southern California, Pyne warns, has even nurtured a "cultural watershed" in which arson is integral; he compares its

psychology to that of mass murder. By the late 1970s the apocalyptic ending of Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locust* was proving a factual prophecy, and fires had become "moda events, a suburban invention." Yet perhaps this was not altogether surprising in a nation where (according to an advertising research report of 1968) Smokey the Bear was better known than the President. He had long been part of federal law; Congress passed a Smokey Bear Act in 1952. And he had successfully been exported: missionaries in the Congo found that local children "were intensely interested in the bear that wore a hat, and wondered if all the animals in America wore hats."

Smokey had in fact developed out of wartime propaganda. In some of his most suggestive pages, Pyne develops the intimate connection between the nation's fire protection and its system of defence, observing that "the morale of fire control has waxed and waned with enthusiasm for, and a sense of purpose by, the military", and that fire protection and war "seem to tip a similar moral energy". The relationship has its grim side. The technology of broadsword fire, used as an instrument of war by the Americans in Vietnam, developed directly out of experience of the brushfires in southern California; in Vietnam at least three attempts were made to create mass fires by which to burn off thick blocks of chemically poisoned vegetation. The success of these experiments is an official secret, but some estimates indicate that 100,000 acres were destroyed in that way. Of course this was not the first or last time that fire has been used as a weapon. I am still trying to decide whether it is comforting to learn that the US Army's experiments in the Second World War with the use of bats to carry chemical bombs were anticipated in the Book of Judges by Samson, who lit firebrands to the tails of three hundred foxes so as to ruin the Philistines' lands and crops.

Occasionally Pyne's earnestness, his sheer enthusiasm for fire, leads him badly astray. He does not admit that a full-scale nuclear war would simply burn America down. Instead, he informs us that "The thermal pulse of the atom bomb not only presented fire research with new problems, it also ignited its imagination and soon led to new methodologies." It seems a tarnished sort of silver lining to find in that particular cloud.

Dear dead decade

Hugh Brogan

BYRON WAGENKNECHT

American Profile 1900-1909

360pp. University of Massachusetts Press. £22.50 (paperback, \$10). 0 8023 330 5

In the 1920s and 30s the distinguished American journalist, Mark Sullivan, brought out his immensely popular *Our Times*, a six-volume history of the United States from 1900 to 1925. The work had many superficial charms: thousands of facts, thousands of anecdotes, hundreds and hundreds of names; it was excellently printed on plain shiny paper; and Sullivan had a rare, good-humoured style. But he produced a mere compendium; his style throughout was that of a man who had cheered Theodore Roosevelt and deeply respected Woodrow Wilson but whose vision of his era was in that respect somewhat commonplace, but who was able to give it the life of his own conviction and energy. He thus made a significant contribution to establishing the standard American view of the early twentieth century, the view which historians have been trying to modify completely. He still makes entertaining and instructive reading. All students of modern American history should have a look at him.

Edward Wagenknecht lists *Our Times* in his *Suggestions For Further Reading*, and refers to it as a "passing note"; but his debt to Mark Sullivan, as a writer and as a man, seems to go deeper than he acknowledged. When Mr. Wagenknecht was a boy in

the days of Theodore Roosevelt, in the years since then he has become a highly prolific author (his blurb says he has written "about sixty books"); it has occurred to him to do in the 1980s pretty much what Sullivan undertook in the 1920s, though at lesser length (thoro are only to be three volumes in all) and with fewer pictures. It has to be asked whether the undertaking is worthwhile, and how well the author has carried out his intentions.

In the matter of execution it is hard to fault him. He emerges as the best of men, with a style that blends a flowing manner with a o' beguiling innocence of outlook. For Mr. Wagenknecht never forgets, or lets his readers forget, that these were the days of his childhood, and he frequently uses his memories of what life then looked or felt like to bring the past vividly before us. In a way *American Profile* is a disguised autobiography, and is pleasant to read because Mr. Wagenknecht is so pleasant to know; he seems to have a happy nature, and he certainly finds it hard to say a harsh word about anybody. His severe only on the coal-owners who resisted the strike of 1902, and hostile only to the Thaw family who, when Harry Kendall Thaw killed the famous architect Stanford White, made full use of their great wealth to "destroy" White's reputation in the process of getting the murderer sent to a madhouse rather than to execution. Wagenknecht does not exactly say that he was disappointed, but he has been hanged or electrocuted, but he feels strongly that White was doubly destroyed by the Thaws and that the case showed there was one law for the rich and another for the poor.

In general, his only mistake is to forget that not everyone in the past struck as he himself did. He is quite relentless in his judgement of people

plays, players and performances; nor is he much better when dealing with literature. It is of very little interest that the essayist Samuel McChord Crothers, "pastor of the First Unitarian Church, on the edge of Harvard Yard" was of his time; nor do I want to know that Laura Jean Libby was the author of *Had She Loved Her Lover*, *When His Love Grew Cold*, *Love Once But Strangers Now*, and *The Price of a Kiss*.

The fact that Wagenknecht can pack into happily so much dead information suggests that he is somewhat out of touch with the present; and this, unfortunately, must be the verdict on his "entire" enterprise. "There was absolutely no need to repeat Mark Sullivan's experiment," Wagenknecht makes it plain that he disapproves of nearly everything that has happened since Pearl Harbor; but when it comes to dealing with the distant past he cannot help writing in a sunny, hopeful fashion: that makes Sullivan (who brought out his first two volumes before the 1929 Crash) seem astute. The book is not quite without fresh material: I was entranced by the pages showing the connection between the Seventh Day Adventists and the invention of cornflakes. On the other hand, the portrait of Theodore Roosevelt, though full, sympathetic and intelligent, contains nothing which cannot easily be found elsewhere.

Altogether, if Mr. Wagenknecht persists in the enterprise, I can only hope that he will make it more of an autobiography and less of a chronicle, and that he will suppress somewhat his antipathy to the present and to the past. I am sure that he will.

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Sutherland

Viewpoint: Foodstuff

Mary Douglas

It always seemed unlikely to me that science and technology have provided us with a modern myth-providing mentality. After all, we still contend with social life's problems. Science and technology do not relieve us of moral responsibilities. We still need long-range explanations of why we do what we do to each other, so presumably we also create our own myths and subscribe to beliefs that do not stand up to the outsider's scrutiny. Gradually, over the years, I have been piecing together a view of something that can be called nutritional materialism. This peculiar set of beliefs seems to be fundamental to our civilization in the same way as magic taboos and their secondary elaborations protect fundamental assumptions in so-called primitive societies. Furthermore, they cause us to perceive the line between nature and culture in a peculiar way. We misrecognize as natural failures, disastrous events of our own making which are often made because of the hold this mythology has over our minds. The parallel is uncomfortably close.

Nutritional materialism assumes that what people say about food and the secular reasons they give for choosing among foods are not to be taken more or less seriously than religious prescriptions. Since the latter have no place in food and nutrition sciences, any richly symbolic presentation of food has to be seen as a poetic flourish or distraction: the real meaning is the hygienic one. Medical materialism was a harmless inquisitorial exercise confined to a reclusive handful of scholars. The more that food policy has important consequences, the more pernicious are its medical materialist foundations.

The term "medical materialism", in William James's use, refers to friendly outsiders' interpretations of peculiar beliefs. No, said the medical materialist, ancient religious prescriptions against sins and taboos cannot be judged rational in the terms in which they are presented. But they have some solid justification as lucky shots hitting good principles of hygiene. This food prohibition protects from that disease, this other dietary law has some other concealed hygienic effect and if we could know more, they might all be justified. When I first thought to argue that medical materialistic explanations should be superseded by more sociological principles, I was defending the rational status of religious thought from such well meant denigration. But for a long time I could not detect in our own civilization equivalent myths of purity and danger whose stated effects could not be demonstrated and whose useful underpinning of social institutions could be exposed. It was frustrating to have a sociological theory of beliefs which ought to have universal application but which evidently did not apply to modern industrial society. However, our dominant ideas about food did bid to match taboo theory. And in a serious way.

Wherever the unravelling starts, a peculiar belief about food emerges that is firmly held in spite of weak or negative evidence. It is shored up by another as peculiar and as weakly supported, and this in turn is protected by secondary elaborations. We end with a tangle of unlikely propositions which vaguely sustain one another. Let us start with the idea widespread among nutritionists that the ordinary member of the public is irrational in his food habits. This claim is that if we were rational he would choose the most nutritious, cost-effective foods. There is an echo or borrowing here from the idea of consumer irrationality in economics, but with a big difference. In economic theory, consumer irrationality is a minor residual element; by and large, consumer behaviour accords sufficiently well with economic rational principles. But when the concept is translated to food policy, public irrationality looms very large. The consumer buys the wrong foods and wastes the good ones. He is stubbornly conservative and blind to his own advantage. According to the nutritionists' complaints, the industrial food-eating public is as benighted as the fabled peasant of the history of agriculture.

Something very odd about this view

of the public appears as soon as we examine it. Consumer conservatism is a prime candidate for demythologizing. Admit that the food market is notoriously subject to fashion. It is a market (in North America) where pizza has recently created a new multimillion-dollar presence. Exotic kiwi fruit is a smart accompaniment to fish and frozen yogurt and Mexican tacos challenge ice-cream and fish-and-chips. The real surprise is that the nutritionists' belief in consumer conservatism is so sturdy.

The very idea of consumer irrationality has been heavily distorted in its translation from other commodities to food. For all other tastes, economic theory leaves consumer judgment sovereign except in the relation between quantities and prices. For tastes in food, the case is different because the nutritionist is comparing choices with the idea of a proper nutrient intake. Theory about food choices is out of step with the economic theory on which it is modelled because the food consumer is handed as someone invited to be left in charge of his own food selection — surely an awkward conclusion for a civilization based on a liberal philosophy.

Instead of getting interested in a theory of food choices (which would have to be a social theory) the issue is dodged by bringing in nutritional education. This idea is modelled on other educational forms, such as training for job proficiency or for democracy. But whereas other education has its successes, the results of nutrition education are disheartening. It is almost as if people did not want to learn. Admittedly, the middle classes who tend only to buy a lot of education, enjoy nutritional education and even pay for it themselves, in magazines and journals. But the people whom the nutritionists would most like to reach are very unresponsive — the needy, the isolated and the poor. It is they who eat junk food, most costly and less nourishing than foods they could be taught to choose. The poorer the housewives are, and the more that wise spending on balanced nutrients could improve their health, the less they are influenced by nutrition education. You would think that research would pay attention to what people who are supposedly so fixed in their tastes really like to eat; especially as it is feasible now to produce any taste or smell or combination of tastes and smells in any material form. Food technologists are ready to produce cheap delicious food of any kind. They are frustrated not knowing what flavours and textures please the palate. But the whole idea of the human palate as something given in nature is patently wrong. The palate is trained and therefore a social product.

Furthermore, there are social pressures on the poorest housewives, pressures of mutual aid and open hospitality which it would often be a domestic disaster to ignore. These pressures call for certain kinds of food-stuffs, divisible and preservable and readily available, regardless of the nutritionists' priorities.

Most of the uses of food are governed by social requirements which nutritional materialism ignores. In the last four or five years, the offices of ICAF (the International Commission for the Anthropology of Food, which is on the staff of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences — IUAES) have made approaches to big foundations especially known to be supporting food research. They were repeatedly told that the main cause of famine and hunger in the world is food availability. Therefore all food research was being devoted to the problem of how to increase food production. The central myth is that people are hungry because there is not enough food to go round. Add this hard-to-dislodge idea to the three ideas of consumer irrationality, conservatism in food tastes and worthwhileness of spending on nutrition education for the poorest classes — each idea draws on the basic assumption of nutritional materialism and we can recognize a makeshift bundle of concepts poorly justified by evidence.

Food tastes are not conservative. Food consumers are not demonstrably irrational. Nutrition education does not work. Famines are not caused by material food shortages. The false myth of food availability deficits as the causes of famines has been demolished by Amartya Sen in his study of the four great famines of Bengal, Bangladesh, Sahel and Ethiopia (see *Poverty and Famines: an Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, 1981, reviewed in the TLS on March 5, 1982). Famines are liable to occur with good harvests and even in prosperity. The real causes are complex shifts in the legal entitlements which determine a person's access to food. The beginnings of disaster are aggravated by political and administrative mishandling. Faced with the onset of famine, administrations act according to their conviction that the cause is physical shortage of food. This blinds them to the accelerating increase in destitution, and they compound the evil by their misdirected efforts.

It is too crude to ask what purposes are served by these beliefs. As with modern religious prescriptions, so with our peculiar ideas about the staff of life, they do not serve specific purposes except to save us from having to pose impolitic questions. Their role is to cover cracks and mask incoherence in social institutions. All that worry about the irrational food purchaser is theoretically directed to the public at large: rich and poor both choose wrong foods. But the rich tend to be actively interested in their own nutritional status, so the main targets of nutrition education are the poor. Though efforts to educate them seem to achieve so

little, they are offered as palliatives to poverty. The poor mother gets a chance of nourishing her children if she could only learn the lessons, and the rest of society can feel better about her poverty. The myth of consumer irrationality comes near to pinning responsibility for her plight on the poor housekeeper herself. Along these lines, the idea that food is strictly intended for nutrition has several strands of comfort at the level of national policy.

The same narrow materialism has practical strategic value at an international level. Food planners and negotiators discuss programmes to help the poorest segments of the poorest countries. They know that unequal access to food is the result of social inequalities, abroad as well as at home. The very places where food distribution is most critically unequal are those in which politics are most sensitive to criticism. Plans for a new economic order must avoid political obstacles. The more precarious the authority in the countries needing aid, the more unacceptable will be any conditions or interventions that threaten the sovereignty of the developing country. This is an important concern, as Albert Fishlow and his co-authors explain in *Rich and Poor Nations in the World Economy* (1978). When international collaboration has to be protected at all costs, mutual political criticism must be excluded from the debates. Food has to be depoliticized so that talk about food can proceed. The blandest talk focuses on production and avoids the topic of food distribution. This is the great international purpose which

governs the collection of fungi and tediously delays their tasting — whether they be sliced, mashed, boiled, fried, or sautéed, drop by viscid drop, into the Vase 69; try them on your aunts first. You will learn, too, nothing from the clear visual index of representatives of common genera: the photographs so good that even the familiar gills of the Peppery Milk-cap look as if they might ooze their own acid-tasting milky droplets off the edge of the page at any moment), to the well-written, concise descriptions and histories of each species, that erupt in the sclerotic stage, is a "violet-black spindle-shaped structure longitudinally furrowed, up to 1 cm long, formed in the inflorescences of grasses." Falling to the ground in the autumn, the mature sclerotic over-winters in this state until late spring, when "tiny pinkish or purplish drumstick-shaped fruit bodies develop from it producing three-lensed aco-sporangia", which infect other grasses, including barley, oats, rye and wheat. And poisoning by *Claviceps purpurea* (ergotism) has been recorded since the Middle Ages. Outbreaks were so sudden and inexplicable that many myths and superstitions grew up around the affliction, which was widely believed to be a divine punishment on sinners. Such were the beliefs and symptoms it was commonly known as Holy Fire. The poisoning can take two forms: that of a burning sensation in the limbs followed by their becoming gangrenous due to the constriction of blood vessels, or affecting the mind causing hallucinations, psychotic behaviour and convulsions.

The random distribution of complete infections was obviously, from a theological point of view, an epidemiological just way to stop sinners short without actually having to amputate the legs of every man and woman on earth; but for centuries ergot was also used by humors, executives, like midwives, to stimulate contractions in childbirth; and it is now known to comprise a mixture of powerful chemicals, including some substances which are related to LSD and others which are used in the treatment of migraine.

But Phillips manages to maintain his high enthusiasm for "much less impressive fungi" he knows the crab-like smell of ageing *Russula* *camphorata*; he tells us that *Lactarius* *ampelophilus* is dried and mashed and used as curry powder in Germany; he remarks that *Stropharia merdaria* is particularly fond of horse dung and admits that even after his researches in edibility remains, sensibly, unknown; and, despite handling some twenty-five thousand specimens of European fungi he can still write with loving accuracy even of *Inocybe patouillardii*, the Red-staining Inocybe, whose cap is just bell-shaped, with a merely low, broad umbo, whose stem is conventional white, whose flesh is likewise undistinguished, whose taste is mild, small unremarkable, gills adnate, chelocystidia thin-walled, spore print dull and brown, beech-wood habitat but conventional, occurrence no more than occasional and poison no more than deadly.

Perhaps he has been sustained by childhood memories of living "with my grandparents on their farm" near the Sarat, as he tells us, where in the autumn, "the most exciting activity was mushroom collecting. I remember one year when we picked seventy pounds in a single day... 900 colour photographs, authoritative notes, good botanical names by species, and general glossary of terms, and instructions on the making of spore prints, the drying of specimens and the use of chemicals, this book is a triumph.

The commonplace of murder

Jonathan Keates
Painting to Naples from Caravaggio to Giordano
Royal Academy

Recent London exhibitions have done less than justice to the cause of Italian art. The National Gallery's recent show of seventeenth-century Venetian, third-rate crusts by second-rate painters, and last winter's Goya montage at the Victoria and Albert Museum are better forgotten. Now honour is substantially redeemed (via a joint initiative with Washington and sponsorship by Marini and Rossi) in an imaginative and adventurous display of Neapolitan painting at the Royal Academy, on view until December 12, when it leaves for Washington.

Lurid, violent, *falsauté*, morbidly sentimental and ghastly capricious, this is the kind of painting which grabs the modern imagination for the most obvious of reasons. In a work such as Caravaggio's "Seven Acts of Mercy", with its haunting tripartite balance between suavity, coarseness and ecstasy, questions of form and technique all too easily take second place to a primitive astonishment at the old man on the left of the picture being breast-fed by a hollow-eyed milkmaid while an initially apologetic pair of lumpy feet are being dragged out behind her.

To term such surprises "baroque" is at once dismissive and imprecise, a useful label which does nothing to explain why the best of this painting is almost without being stagey. Ambrosia Gentileschi's "Judith and Holofernes" from Capodimonte

splendidly captures this improvisatory intensity in the heroine's no-nonsense slicing through the general's neck, a fist freshets of blood spurt over the pillow. By so flamboyant a distraction from her clumsy handling of the arms (that of Holofernes, upstretched towards Judith's Caravaggesque maid, seems to belong in another picture altogether) Artemisia heightens the feeling that we are witnesses of a painterly performance, in which professionalism is more an affair of panache, last-minute versatility and a touch of malicious Italian *furbia* than the result of studious technical calculation.

The severed head is one of the countless flashes of sudden violence which leap at the onlooker from these lurid canvases. For succeeding ages this was archetypally the world of hired bravos and lurking banditti, and Pacecco's "Massacre of the Innocents", Preti's "Feast of Absalom" or Cavallino's more sinisterly intimate handling of the same subject all use murder as an essential commonplace of daily life. More precisely, in the Neapolitan context, it was a world fragmented by disease, famine, earthquake and volcanic eruption and split in half by Masaniello's revolt of 1647, whose effect on the contemporary imagination the admirable catalogue (edited by Clovis Whitfield and Jane Martineau, 304pp., £5.95, 0 297 78189 8) tends to underestimate.

No very singular irony, then, that the century's second half, in the wake of the 1656 plague, should have witnessed a perceptible softening of approach among its artists, so that Preti and Giordano, in their celebratory treatments of the city's liberation from suffering, reach towards a kind of luminous optimism unimaginable

among the pensive, frowning denizens of scenes by Caracciolo, Cavallino and the earlier Stanzone. Even Salvatore Rosa's bandits and *contadini*, amid their shaggy, castle-crowned outcrops, possess the comfortable remoteness of figures observed from the road by a passing traveller, and the exhibition's perspective closes in the nervously handled, faintly hysterical refinements of Solimena's radiant "Madonna of the Rosary".

The show aims at variety and comprehensiveness, but is equally successful in focusing upon the work of individual masters so as to point up the diversity of their range. For many English visitors this will constitute a first encounter with the elusive "Master of the Annunciation to the Shepherds" (but can the self-consciously antique "Birth of the Virgin" from Cusellamare really be his? It was once given to Giulio Romano and looks as if it ought to be by Rosso Fiorentino) and with Bernardo Cavallino, whose mercurial talent managed to absorb hints from Velazquez, Vouet and Van Dyck as well as Poussinesque traits in his later work. Commendably, under the circumstances, Caravaggio is here treated more as an admired *terminus post quem* than as the exhibition's central point (apart from the "Acts of Mercy" we are shown the "Flagellation" and three disputed ascriptions); far wider coverage is offered to the most distinguished of *caravaggeschi*, Giovanni Battista Caracciolo, inviting us to see in "A Miracle of St Anthony", whose gymnastic angel, a brilliant compositional afterthought, vaults towards the inclined figures below out of a reverberating brown gulf, the hand of a resolute original rather than a glib pasticheur.



"Judith and Holofernes" by Artemisia Gentileschi, from the exhibition reviewed here.

The effect of alien styles upon a cosmopolitan community, where the arrival of a Caravaggio or an Artemisia made an immediate impact, shows best in the hazyre apparition, amid the beards, tatters and mortuary gloom, of a single Rubens, "The Feast of Herod", which arrived in the city in 1640, and had an abiding influence on the Neapolitan manner. The triumphant incongruity of its sumptuous textures and glowing colour in the southern Baroque context makes an inspired juxtaposition: the subject, Salome's exultation over John the Baptist's head with a buxom Herodias and a faintly sickened Herod looking on, now appears quiescently Neapolitan, but is stamped to have been this picture which commenced the "bloody banquet" theme on the fancy of Preti.

Cavallino and their followers as a native cliché. Though, as Sir Harold Acton's preface to the catalogue reminds us, Naples was a Spanish city both in custom and allegiance, a distinctive local idiom, acrid but arresting, dominates the entire display. It is seen as powerfully in Preti's "Alms-giving", with its sinister trio of *sequestrati* against a turbid sky, as in the glowing mouth of Cavallino's Judith or Guarino's coquettish St Agatha; as potentially expressed in the trumpery magnificence of Francesco's St Catherine as among the filthy feet of the anonymous "Annunciation" master's shepherds or in the Parthenopean thoughtfulness on the face of his "Girl with a Rose".

Something lost in the translation

Lucy Ellmann
Ate Italiana 1960-1982
Hayward Gallery

Are Italiani 1960-1982 (at the Hayward Gallery until January 9) is a selection from the work of eighty-one Italian artists during the last twenty-two years. It features therefore video and kinetic art, as well as paintings by Lucio Fontana and Clemente, sculptures by Arnaldo Pomodoro and Manzoni. But although separated into thematic sections, such as "Azzurmentum" (turning to zero), these works (see the British public essentially unrepresented by context, familiarity, or a common language. The artist's (285pp, Arts Council/Electa, £15.00, 0 287 03289 8) does what it can to provide reproductions of additional work by each artist, but has no index or translations of the long spate in Italian that some artists have incorporated in their resultingly esoteric paintings. Lucio Fontana submits a bright botanical diagram of recent trends in Italian art, which she punctuates with frequent exclamations. It is followed by the essays of each of the five Italian critics who selected the work, of which some, in particular that of Guido Ballo, are more incomprehensible than others. Perhaps something has been lost in the translation.

In his abstract paintings, Tapered seagulls between illusion and material reality. He uses white squares and hatching to establish where the picture surface lies, giving depth by contrast to the darker areas. Guido Ballo writes of this affect, in the catalogue: "His colour sign lies in the limitation of the stroke and turns into the line or network, transposed into abstract spatially imaginary voyages or the life and emotions of the landscape." As with most of his barely fertilized eggs of abstraction, Ballo fails to enlarge on the original view of lagoons.

Among the younger artists in the show is the painter Omar Calabrese, whose delicate use of colour and

the message of much of this show, though with variable success. Piero Manzoni, in his "Achromies", simplifies the approach to an awareness of materials by sleeking unisyltous (such as glass wool and polystyrene pellets) onto traditional picture formats. But his "Magical Base", a wooden pedestal supporting two colour-casting shoe pads (on bronze figure to be seen), mocks his own taste for lively materials (and is enough to walk away, in this case) as much as it mocks artistic aspirations in general. With none of Manzoni's wit, Agostino Bonalumi stretches his painted canvases over awkward hidden shapes. This accentuates material qualities of canvas more by unsetting the specter. David Borani, one of the Gruppo T kinetic artists, concentrates on less conventional means, using hidden circling magnets to spark off strange activity and stellar formations in fur-like metal filings, dragged up from a moonscape-like pile. Materials are emphasized too here by their negation or inappropriateness. Mario Schifano's "I Don't Love Nature", for instance, with its dripped paint, glimpses of human anatomy and its unfinished state, is a mish-mash of animal and mineral decomposition. Alik Cavalleri laboriously depicts his means — metal and human flesh — to achieve the lifeless artificiality of a shop-window display, but, without their sense of purpose.

But there is much that need not be ignored in the rest of the exhibition. Marcello Jori plays with the concepts of order and chaos in youth landscapes from which words or geometrical forms emerge. And Futurist concerns seem to re-emerge in Michelangelo's "The Space of the Soul" drawings, with their crowding together of contrary substances. The frequent references among many artists here to myth, religion, and of course to the Italian past, are as much a religious as a cultural statement. Both are

makes his close-up of the sun's surface. "The Wheel of Loto", a vigorous mixture of matter and energy, Emilio Igrò's blacked out books have been compared to the reduction of buildings and landscape to characterless bulk in Christo's packaging of the environment. Igrò suppresses written information in favour of the visual layout in which such information is customarily conveyed. But unlike Christo, words sometimes remain unscoured, proposing entirely new meanings for Igrò's manipulated encyclopaedias. In the style of Tom Phillips's *A Humument*, Concetto Rozzi too enjoys the distancing effect of using ready-made materials. In his "From the Suicide by Grosz", the image of a distressed woman lying on her back is repeated, forty times, accompanied by various sorts of everyday objects — plastic flowers, light bulbs, mirrors, slippers, bread rolls. With repetition though, the human victim of all this begins to seem comic — both the and her shiny objects incur Pozzani's ridicule.

A programme of video films shows every two hours tackles the question of how much boredom the viewers can endure — most depart post-haste. Each film is too long and tips to get across clichés about primitive religious beliefs and culture. In the first (and, I'm afraid, the best) film shown, some sagging guinea-pigs run around a table on which sits a guinea-pig, a naked girl is sitting, with the requisite dazed look. She occasionally bestir herself to hit some cymbals together, thus clearing the guinea-pig.

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Liberties with a legend

D. D. R. Owen

The Song of Roland
Translated by C. H. Sisson
BBC Radio

The *Song of Roland* was the audiovisual event of its age. Through the incantatory art of the jongleur, countless medieval audiences participated in its dire action and brilliant scenes rich in colour, high in emotional charge, impressive in their stylized dignity. That the BBC was to present a full version was an exciting prospect. For seven seasons our home would become our castle, and we could hope to catch something of the experience that once fired imaginations and left its mark on centuries of literature, standards of honour and integrity, and even on recorded history.

Sixty years after the Conquest, William of Malmesbury claimed the *Song* had been struck up at Hastings to inspire the Norman troops. Wace later named the minstrel as Taillefer—a nice irony, since this character is first met

opening the battle in the early *Carmen de Hasinoge Proelio* and can be shown to be patterned on Roland himself. In fact the *Carmen* was much indebted to the *Song*, both for certain incidents and for the portrayal of William and Harold, shown respectively in terms of Roland and Charlemagne or of Ganelon and Marsile; and some of this has crept into the mainstream of English history. In literature and legend, the *Roland's* influence was stamped not only on the medieval epic but even on courtly romance; and it is likely that King Arthur with his illustrious nephew and company of the Round Table achieved immortality at least in part as British rivals to Charlemagne, Roland and the peers.

Such was the astonishing power of a legend which, inspired by a humiliating military setback, grew eventually into a heroic drama of triumph in disaster. But whatever its exemplary function as a vehicle for feudal ideals, it could never have caught the Middle Ages by the throat had it not come into the hands of a poet of genius using a rich, resonant language with unparalleled skill. Basic to his art was his manipulation of sound: the beat of the verse, the acoustic exploitation of

repeated elements, formulae, phrases, and a tempo varying with the mood from the breathless evocation of battle as a ritualized "dance of death" to the slow anguish of a lament for the dead—and through it all the almost hypnotic rhythm of the assonating decasyllable.

To attempt an "authentic" presentation with a single reciter would have been a tremendous challenge to translator, producer and performer, but one the BBC could have met, given the right text. Sadly (some might think prudently) it has been declined, the script being read by a number of actors and supplemented by the occasional intervention of attractively atmospheric music (composed by Nigel Osborne), scored for several instruments, not the solitary jongleur's fiddle.

The result is disappointing, although it may be the best that could have been done, given the nature of C. H. Sisson's translation. His concern has not been to reproduce the strong pulse of the verse or its subtler aural effects. His lines of uneven length, usually paired together with rhyme, approximate rhyme or assonance, remind us that a poet has passed this way, but leave no impression of vibrant

chant or song. With the original's acoustic finery thus stripped away, it is doubly important that the dignity of its substance be maintained, a responsibility that Sisson, despite many happy touches, has not always met.

His search for rhyme or the next best thing is partly to blame, producing such infelicities as a pagan's "vaut" "As sure as eggs are eggs/The twelve peers won't stay on their legs" or Ganelon's request of Charlemagne "Oive me your blessing./Since I must go, no point in missing", while the improbable rendering of "Anseis li fiers" is "Anseis / Who is so full of his own fleas". One wonders at times if such oblique versions are due to caprice or to misunderstanding. There are certainly some mistranslations, ranging from the relatively minor (a plural for a singular, for instance, that obscures the sense) to the serious, as when Roland's "Olive, brother, you I must not fail" becomes "Olive, you are my brother but I / Have failed you."

One further example shows how Sisson's free method can combine in a few lines mistranslation, gratuitous addition, an element of whimsically inappropriate interpretation, and a general lowering of tone. Ganelon bluntly speaks Charlemagne's ultimatum to his arch-enemy. Should Marsile reject the terms, he will be seized and brought to Aix. I translate literally: "You'll be flung on a wretched pack-animal. There you'll be condemned to lose your head. Our emperor sends you this letter." He delivers it into the pagan's right hand. Sisson's version runs:

"He says you would
Go on a donkey like a load of wood.
There you would lose your head. You'd better
Have a look at the emperor's letter."
And with that he hands it over
Like a billet-doux from a lover.

This, to be fair, does not pretend to be a scholarly translation for experts. For many listeners no doubt it provides a few hours of pleasurable entertainment; and it may tickle the palate of some for further exploration of medieval legend. Yet the BBC could have produced a passable, and more stirring, version. The evidence is in their splendid 1966 programme *A Boyeux Tapestry*, which was threaded through with extracts from the *Roland* (in Scott-Moncrieff's translation) and opened with some lines of the original delivered with truly epic panache.

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John Co. 116

to the editor

Burckhardt

Sir, - Lord Dacre was quite right to castigate (October 8) the errors in the notes to the edition of Jacob Burckhardt's lectures on the "Study of History" because accuracy is a duty and not a virtue, as Karl Lachmann once said. Mistakes, however caused, are always the editor's responsibility.

Jacob Oeri's role as an editor, however, was more complex than the Master of Peterhouse recognizes: against Burckhardt's clear indication Oeri transposed the chapter on "Fortune and Misfortune in History" from its place in the methodological introduction to the end of the book, and thus obscured both its function as a critique of the historian's value judgments and the rigorous structure of the lecture course (p. 46f). It would have been tedious and pedantic to list all other minor and minor alterations he made, a view with which Werner Kaege in its entirety agrees. Some changes may appear trivial, such as the removal of the inverted commas in the sentence "Alexander conquers Persia and Bismarck unites Germany" in the chapter on "Great Men" (p. 40f), but in so doing Oeri wrongly gave the impression that his uncle was equating the German Chancellor's achievement with that of Alexander the Great.

Cautiously Oeri's innumerable changes blur Burckhardt's arguments and soften the toughness of his aphoristic style. On the eve of publication Oeri, a classics master at the Obergymnasium in Basel, delivered this version of the lectures in his uncle's place in the university. The philologist's task is to establish - as accurately as possible - an authentic text, and in this case it seemed proper to offer it *ad placidam manes*. The historian, of course, has every right to prefer the text he has long been familiar with.

P. F. GANZ,
St Edmund Hall, Oxford.

Sir, - Having checked my references, I see that I was wrong to call Heinrich Ranke a pupil of Ranke (October 8). As Daniel Johnson says (Letters, October 22), he was a pupil of Hegel, which however (since Burckhardt was equally opposed to Hegel and Ranke) does not affect my argument. But I do not concede that I was even "inadvertently" wrong in the "implication" of my remarks about Leo's "famous remark" "ein frischer fröhliche Krieg". I believe that it is Mr Johnson who is inadvertent. As Professor Ganz writes (p. 67), on precisely this point, "nicht jeder seiner Zuhörer hat den wohl ironisch verstandenen - Ton des Dozenten an dieser Stelle richtig verstanden". To anyone familiar with Burckhardt's work, the irony, which has escaped Mr Johnson, must be obvious.

HUGH TREVOR-ROPER,
The Master's Lodge, Peterhouse, Cambridge.

Sir, - Hugh Trevor-Roper did well (October 8) to stress the primacy of lecturing at Basel and Jacob Burckhardt's part in it. The tradition was still flourishing in the early 1950s. The then Professor of Art History, Joseph Gantner, gave his main semi-public lecture at the increasingly inconvenient time of four o'clock on a Friday

afternoon. He was, I was told, pressed to find some alternative, but declined on the grounds that Jacob Burckhardt had always lectured at that hour.

Instruction was also given. For the first lecture I delivered there the Professor of English, Henry Lüdtke, sat at the back of the room. At the end he advanced on me, saying, "I have something very important to tell you." As I mentally booked my ticket home, he continued, "You should write bigger on the blackboard."

OLYN TEGAI HUGHES,
Oregynog, University of Wales, Newtown, Powys.

America and the Vietnam War

Sir, - Hugh Brogan's letter (October 22) about my comments on the Indo-China war was most interperate but the issues he raised do deserve a reply. On his first point: was Hanoi's imperialism really resiting? Obviously, in retrospect, the answer must be a faint no - the United States has yet to recover from the enormous loss of power, prestige and self-confidence caused by the war and the eventual defeat. That result, however, was not preordained. It was brought about precisely by the two agencies which I castigated in my review of Kissinger's book: the unstrategic use of military power under McNamara's direction, and then the unreasoning opposition to the war. But the dismal outcome does not mean that Hanoi should not have been resisted, any more than the eventual defeat of France in 1940 meant that Hitler's peace offer of October 1939 should have been accepted. Unless one can argue that the United States should have anticipated the eventual willingness and ability of the Chinese to resist the expansion of the North Vietnamese, the justification for the war stands fully valid - and the defeat merely proves that the war should have been fought with far less fire-power, much greater tactical skill and, above all, a coherent strategy. Incidentally, how can Mr Brogan justify his comment that "[US] casualties were extremely high"? The canonical number for all the Americans killed in Indo-China happens to coincide with the standard figure usually cited for the annual toll of traffic death: fifty thousand. Whatever else it might have been, Vietnam was not the Somme.

Mr Brogan's second claim was that the war was exceptionally cruel and destructive ("Nixon's orgy of destruction"); certainly the misuse of fire-power, in huge quantities, by the American forces conveyed that impression at the time, in colour and in all our living-rooms. It remained for the victors to educate us in the real meaning of cruelty and destructiveness. Once the TV cameras had left with the Americans, the knife, the axe and the AK-47s greatly exceeded the accomplishments of B-52s, Panthers and all the rest; it has become the convention to attribute the post-war evils to the Khmer Rouge alone, but one notes that refugees keep coming out of Vietnam, and who knows what horrors are at work to make them risk the desperate voyage? Characteristically, Hanoi's spokesmen have bitterly criticized the United States for "enticing" the refugees out of Vietnam, even while it seems that the traffic is part of

an extortion/expulsion scheme conducted by the authorities in Saigon.

On Cambodia, Mr Brogan writes of the "genocidal strategy of the American high command". That, of course, is the classic inversion that was the centrepiece of the Shawcross book: the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge after their victory is imputed to the Americans who tried to prevent that victory. The only "strategy" pursued by the United States in Cambodia was an attempt to deny the use of Cambodian territory by the North Vietnamese; this was not genocidal either in its intent or its consequences (the area affected by the bombing campaign was a jungle scarcely inhabited by civilians but crossed by North Vietnamese convoys and occupied by Vietnamese forces). Since the nexus between the anti-war opposition, the termination of US aid to the Lon Nol regime, the victory of the Khmer Rouge and the subsequent genocide is so very direct, it is not surprising that it is always Cambodia that provokes the most extreme distortions of the evidence.

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK,
4510 Drummond Avenue, Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815.

'Young Edward Gibbon'

Sir, - The habit of naming Gibbon's ailment a hydrocele persists, I think, because the distinction between a true hydrocele and any watery swelling has been lost on laymen like myself. Patricia Craddock, for example, refers to a "hydrocele" while at the same time citing de Beer's earlier article, 1949, "The Malady of Edward Gibbon". Laymen may also have difficulty, as I do, in interpreting Gibbon's medical history in the late 1780s, when the swelling in his groin became considerably enlarged. Finally, one may as well admit to giving up legends reluctantly. In Port Martin, 1923, C. MacLaurin confessed to telling generations of medical students about the great hydrocele - "one of those monstrous things which exist mainly in romance" - while indicating his sober belief that Gibbon suffered from both a hernia and a hydrocele. Whether hernia or hydrocele, however, the thing hung down to Gibbon's knee and fairly well earned its legendary standing: it was above all what he hid from himself.

The impossible phrasing "in his" - pointed out by Milo Keynes (Letters, September 10) - was all my own.

W. B. CARNOCHAN,
Department of English, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305.

Palindromes

Sir, - Intrigued by Andrew Belsey's strict definition of a "perfect" palindrome (Letters, October 1) as one that reads identically forwards and backwards without altering either the punctuation or the spacing, I sat down this evening to try my hand at the form under the new rules. Though none of my attempts possesses any merit, I was able to exceed his reigning champion in the category of longest perfect palindrome (thirty-one characters, not counting spaces).

The first of these may be considered an outcry by Count Dracula's son: "DAD DID EVIL DEED ON SEXES NO DEED LIVE DID DAD" (thirty-seven letters). The second reflects the anger of a group of sailors whose TV reception was obscured by a canine mascot which damaged the ship's electronic gear just as the Deity was making a personal appearance on a late-night talk show: "EVIL DOGS WAS RAT ON RADAR NO TAR SAW GOD LIVE" (thirty-five letters). The third represents the confessions of a young officer about his corruption while he served with a military high command in wartime: "NOW SAW I WAR, ON TOP - SEXES - POT NO, RAW I WAS WON" (thirty-nine characters, including all the reversible interior punctuation).

As Andrew Belsey affirms, there can doubtless be longer "perfect" palindromes than these. I look forward to seeing an evening's work of others.

DONALD H. REIMAN,
The Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, Room 815, 41 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017.

Christianity and Democracy

Sir, - Edward Norman (October 8) might have mentioned that Christ was crucified by democratic vote. The crowd chose Barabbas.

IDRIS PARRY,
24 Albert Square, Altrincham, Cheshire.

Among this week's contributors

G. W. S. BARROW is Sir William Fraser Professor of Scottish History at the University of Edinburgh. His books include *Kingdom of the Scots*, 1973.

T. J. BINYON is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. His crime novel *Swan Song* was published last month.

HUOH BROGAN is the author of *Abraham Lincoln*, 1974.

JEREMY CATTO is a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

DAVID CRANE is a lecturer in English at the University of Durham.

MARY DOUGLAS's books include *Natural Symbols*, 1970, and *Implicit Meanings*, 1976.

PHILIPPA FOOT is the author of *Virgins and Vices*, 1980.

JOHN GRIGO's books include *Nancy Astor: Portrait of the Pioneer*, 1980.

A. E. HARVEY is a Canon of Westminster.

ALISTAIR HAYTER's books include *Optima and the Romantic Imagination*, 1968.

PETER HEBBLESTWATTE's most recent book, *Introducing John Paul II: the Populist Pope*, was published earlier this year.

ROBERT HUGHESON's *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-60* was published last year.

ERIC KORN is an antiquarian book-seller in London.

GORDON LEFF is the author of *Disillusion of the Medieval Outlook*, 1976.

DAVID LOOBE's *Working with Structuralism* was published last year.

PETER LOMAS's books include *The Case for a Personal Psychotherapy*, 1981.

LAIN MCGILCHRIST is a Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford. His *Against Criticism* was published earlier this year.

W. J. HOLLENWEGGER is Professor of Mission at the University of Birmingham.

J. C. HOULLEN is a lecturer in New Testament Studies at King's College, London.

OSWALD IRVINE is the Vicar of St Matthew's Westminster, and a Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral.

PETER JIMACK is Professor of French at the University of Stirling.

JONATHAN KEATES teaches English at the City of London School.

PAUL KENNEDY's most recent book is *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy 1865-1980*, 1981.

SIMON KEYNES's *The Diplomas of King Aethelred: The Unredey: a Study in their use as Historical Evidence* was published in 1980.

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PAUL KENNEDY's most recent book is *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy 1865-1980*, 1981.

SIMON KEYNES's *The Diplomas of King Aethelred: The Unredey: a Study in their use as Historical Evidence* was published in 1980.

ERIC KORN is an antiquarian book-seller in London.

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The spirit, sex and Satan

S. S. Prawer

ALBRECHT SCHÖNE
Gmütszelchen, Liebeszauber,
Samskult: Neue Einblicke in alte
Goethezeit
200p. Munich: Beck. DM 34.
1406 08 5371

English readers will come to these stimulating essays well prepared. Professor E. M. Wilkinson's celebrated lecture on "Goethe's Sexual Attitudes" and the inclusion of the now tabooed poem *Das Tagebuch* in David Luke's Penguin selection and translation of Goethe's verse, have sharpened eyes on this side of the Channel for aspects of the poet's works which the Victorians, who made him one of their sages, studiously ignored. The books of E. M. Butler have left their readers in no doubt that important features of Goethe's mature writings can only be understood by those who know something of postmodernism, of witch-cults, and of Satanism. Osman Durrani's recent *Goethe and the Bible* has redirected attention to the central part that biblical quotation, allusion, parody and "counterfactual" play in his dramatic masterpiece. That some of Goethe's works can be read *sub sensu commercialis*, and that knowledge of minute details of the social and physical life in eighteenth-century Weimar can materially further their

ecstasy, will come as no surprise to those who have studied the pioneering writings of W. H. Bruford. As it happens, Albrecht Schöne finds no occasion for mentioning any of these scholars, though he writes in their spirit; but he does enlist British cooperation in his enterprise by making excellent use of the recorded opinions and demonstrations of the late F. P. Pickering.

The book is made up of three essays, each on one work of acknowledged importance in the Goethe canon, and each with a strong central argument. The first, on *Winter Journey in the Harz Mountains* (*Harzreise*), shows, with impressive detail, how Goethe embodied and generalized in that difficult and mysterious poem his own existential problem during the period of its composition: the identity-crisis he suffered when faced with assuming more and more administrative duties in the state of Sachse-Weimar at a time when the dangers he had so recently depicted in *Werther* had not been wholly banished from his own life and personality. Schöne's argument hinges on the demonstration that the poem is an experiment in *anagory*, an attempt to question an oracle in the fashion banded down in classical tradition. This begins with the image of the hovering bird of prey at the beginning and culminates in the lines about the inward part, the "Geweide", of the mountain at the end. Goethe obscures this "augury" theme, along with much else, in later, distancing revisions which entailed substitution of the word "mit unersoffenem Busen" (with unexplored bosom) for the phrase that included the word "Geweide".

Since some manuscripts, seen by Goethe's contemporaries or by nineteenth-century scholars, appear to have been lost, Schöne finds himself driven to ingenious exercises in textual reconstruction, which make notable use of a text Goethe seems to have dictated to a secretary named Philipp Seidel. Such manuscripts to hands other than the poet's own play a significant part in the later essays too; and it is pleasant to record that in a book concerned with Goethe's spiritual crises and development as well as with the world of devils, witches, and spirits of all kinds, two indispensable documents turn out to have been written by a secretary called, Geist. To the Seidel manuscript there are some dotation errors to be rectified, often with reference to later readings, before an Urversion can be reconstructed. Here one would sometimes like more details than Schöne finds space for. In line 2, for instance, Seidel's text has "was" looks like a preposition followed by an uninflected, compound adjective followed by "a noun". Schöne changes the apparent adjective into a

noun - "auf Morgenschlossen Wolken" - but fails to tell us how he thinks these two nouns are grammatically related one to the other. How would, how should, a translator cope with this? And what about Seidel's spelling "Dichichts", which Schöne rightly amends to "Dickichts"? Might this tell us something about Goethe's pronunciation? Curiously enough Herder, in a copy he made of the same poem some three years afterwards, writes "Dichtichs". None of this affects Schöne's central argument, however; its steady and elegant course helps us relate puzzling parts of the final version of the poem to the whole in ways that would have been difficult without appreciation of the "oracle" or "augury" theme which appears much more clearly in the poem's earlier guise.

Schöne does not belong to the company of those who believe that first versions, or Ur-versions, are always best, but the arguments of all three essays in this volume will serve to strengthen the belief many of us hold that in important instances, including some parts of *Werther* and the "Sesenheim" poems, the later Goethe's alterations of what his earlier self had written were anything but improvements.

Few would disagree with Schöne's contention that this applies very obviously to *Alexis and Dora*, the subject of the second - and to my mind the best - essay in this volume. His list of variant readings shows that again and again Goethe spoils his own best inspirations by following out pedantic suggestions from A. W. Schlegel, and that in this case the original version is without doubt superior to the later revision. What this chapter succeeds in doing is nothing less than solving, at long last, a riddle which Goethe set the readers of this elegiac idyll or idyllic elegy - a riddle announced in words that David Luke translates: "It is thus that poets often recite to their audiences an artful riddle of words interwoven; every hearer enjoys the strange combination of attractive images, but the word is still missing in which the meaning lies locked" (reviewer's italics). Schöne brilliantly demonstrates that the word which may be "missing" in the hearer's consciousness before he has solved the riddle is in fact present in the poem itself. It is the word "Myrte" and the sexual connotations which it serves to unlock in its narrower and wider context.

Nor is the interpreter content to demonstrate, in ways I find wholly persuasive, how much that was puzzling in the poem falls into place once this riddle is solved; he also tries to show, very instructively, how it could come about that the solution remained hidden for almost 200 years. He does this by means of a piece of *Rezeptionsgeschichte* which differs from orthodox histories of "critical reception" by tracing, not the gradual unfolding of inherent meanings to the course of time, but the propagation of explicable errors. This process begins with Schiller, who was all too eager to make the poem conform to the classification "naïve idyll" he had recently evolved in his essay *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, and it ends (in Schöne's view) with critics whose socially conditioned view of the German classics precluded the search for sexual meanings where these did not openly and directly appear on the surface. This "negative history" of critical reception will almost certainly start a lively controversy; but whatever the outcome, there can be no doubt that it will be a welcome addition to the discussion of *Alexis and Dora* without full attention to Schöne's shrewdly and learnedly argued case.

The third essay is the most elaborate of all. It adduces a wealth of examples to show how Goethe's settings for the "Walpurgis Night" episode of *Faust* demonstrate close and first-hand acquaintance with the literature of witch-cult and Satanism; and that they point inescapably to his later, more explicit Satanism. Schöne's argument is drawn from his reading. Mature reflection, however, convinced him that his public would be too scandalized by all this, and so

therefore abandoned his scheme. Schöne believes that what he substituted, in the end, for the planned witches' sabbath - the scene which bears the title *Walpurgis Night's Oberon*, or *The Golden Wedding of Oberon and Titania* - makes up for a dramatically much less sense and constitutes a feeble and needlessly distracting episode in *Faust, Part One*. No one who has ever suffered through a full performance of this tired charade (which wise stage-directors cut down to a minimum if they tackle it at all) can fail to sympathize with this view.

Eyebrows are bound to be raised, however, by Schöne's subsequent attempt to "reconstruct" the Walpurgis Night scene as it might have been by bringing together Goethe's unpublished drafts with readings of passages he did publish - including the whole "Open Field" scene, which now becomes part of "Walpurgis Night" - and linking the resulting text with stage-directions in a decidedly un-Goethean idiom: "The multitude lines up for a round-dance which passes over into a sexual orgy", or again: "After lascivious dance with Faust approaches the sexual act." Well - yes, it might be interesting to see how all this would work out in an actual stage-production; but on the whole this kind of reconstruction is a questionable enterprise one would not like to see widely imitated. It appears that Schöne offered it to a German television station for performance in the present Goethe anniversary year, and that it was turned down. This decision may well be reconsidered in the near future, but I, for one, cannot think it misguided. The amalgam of Schöne and Goethe makes interesting reading, though, and it again and again prompts comparison with another treatment of the Faust legend: Heine's halcyon scenario *Der Doktor Faust*, with its long introduction in German devils, which clearly draws on many of the works that Goethe also used when he composed the fragments his later interpreter has now tried to weld into a scene Goethe might have envisaged but never put together in this form.

I find it somewhat surprising that a critic as sensitive to sexual/sociological overtones as Schöne should himself be to can end the first of his essays with a sentence that would have been immediately celebrated, in my student-days, as a classic of unintentional humour. Using an image from *Winter Journey in the Harz Mountains*, the author speaks of the page before them, against the excesses of lay before Goethe: "Before one", he adds, in what constitutes the last sentence of the essay, "who wanted to water the world and did water it."

There are brief polemics, in passing, against those who import their own wish-dreams of "organic unity" and harmony into the classics; against the sleight-of-hand practised by critics who paraphrase the works they discuss in such a way that they substitute "poems of their own" - "Eigendichtung" - for what is actually warranted by the marks on the page before them; against the excesses of "reception-theorists" who fail to distinguish with sufficient critical rigour between recorded interpretations that can be, and those that

cannot be, justified in face of the interpreted work; and against concentration on the analysis of comies, thrillers, jokes and various forms of sub-literature at the expense of writings that have greater depth of insight and complexity of organization. Such polemics, it is important to stress, occupy proportionally little space in a volume concerned to offer, as its author tells us, a "naïve école de reading"; a volume that seldom strays far from the concrete, representative instance, discussed in a way that allows the reader to test his own insights, his own reactions, against those of the author.

"You do agree, don't you, that this is how it works, that this fact and that belong together, that this passage in one work illuminates that passage in another?" Such are the unspoken challenges we hear throughout these essays; and it soon becomes obvious that what Schöne tells us has in fact been tested out in seminars, at conferences and guest-lectures with ensuing discussion, in conversation with colleagues and friends, in earlier publications by this same author which were changed, and whose contentions are now corrected where necessary, and - of course - through judicious pondering of the analyses recorded by generations of previous commentators in Germany and abroad. He constantly makes us feel that we are taking part in communal activity - that we are not simply being invited to listen to one person's ruminations on works he happens to have read and enjoyed. In its turn, this book will itself undoubtedly engender further debate which will carry the process described beyond the relative fixity of publication. But there is another, especially pleasing way in which this book may truly be said to involve a scholarly community. Schöne makes it perfectly clear to his readers that his work would have been impossible without the unstinting co-operation of colleagues in the DDR, notably Professor K.-H. Hahn and Dr Eva Beck, both of the Weimar National Archive where many of the manuscripts the author needed for his researches are deposited. This is indeed a welcome portent after the disagreements that led to such a waste of effort as the two parallel critical editions of Heine's works - one East, one West - which are at present in progress. It is not the first time in German history that political divisions have been bridged by cultural cooperation; and it is to be hoped that future large-scale cultural enterprises involving such co-operation will have the same success as this small-scale one.

1982 has seen the 150th anniversary of Goethe's death, and the occasion has been and is being marked by many symposia, lecture-series and other celebrations whose results will, no doubt, eventually find their way into print. Already the shelves are beginning to groan under the weight of publications that range from paperback reprints of Goethe's works to an imaginatively illustrated pictorial record of his life (Jörn Göres, *Goethe's Leben in Bildsdokumenten*, Munich, C. H. Beck), and from an impeccably scholarly documentation of translation activities in his ambience (*Weltliteratur. Die Lust am Übersetzen im Jahrhundert Goethes. Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Literaturarchivs im Schiller-Nationalmuseum Marbach am Neckar*, ed. R. Tgahrt and others, Munich, Kösel) to a curious ragbag of snippets from Goethe and his critics along with musical compositions, parodies, cartoons, advertisements and other such material, assembled by two Goethe humorists (*Unter Goethe. Ein Lesebuch*, ed. Eckhard Henschel and F. W. Bernstein, Zurich, Dilegance). The most exciting prospect of all, perhaps, is opened by the recent announcement that new English versions of Goethe's major works are being commissioned from a team that includes Christopher Middleton, David Luke, and Eric Blackall. It is safe to say, however, that the anniversary is not likely to produce many critical reassessments, much less challenging readings. The lively essays united in Professor Schöne's book

Fertility Rites

The lady with the red hair wears a red fur
Around her neck, a dead fox.

She muscled me into this world
From between her legs (my first bleeding).

My mother's smell is like the musk of the fox.
I grow to love the always-warm pelt -

The fox becomes my familiar.
I flesh the fur and raise it to life;

I give him two penetrating
Eyes, and pristine teeth.

It is March, and I have grown to manhood.
Rain plips the waxy evergreens

By the roadside, where I find the stiff corpse
Of a young fox, fur glossed by the rainfall.

Hardened blood lips the clean white enamel
Of the incisors; one eye is good.

The other closed by matter as hard as resin.
I lift him to look into his good eye.

He has that familiar smell.

Alan Bleakley

In next week's Times Literary Supplement...

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Anglican Trojan Horse

Peter Hebblethwaite

BRIAN MARTIN

John Henry Newman: His Life and Work
160pp. Chatto and Windus, £8.95.
0 7011 2588 8

This is a very short book — none the worse for that — about a very long life. Its modest aim is to introduce Newman to those who know little about him. At the same time Brian Martin disposes of the myth, propagated by Lytton Strachey, that Newman was "a child of the Romantic Revival, a creature of emotion and memory, a dreamer whose spirit dwelt apart in delectable mountains". On the contrary, he writes, "Newman's emotions were subject to his intellect" and he worked out his religious positions by hard intellectual graft and scholarship. Far from being an ethereal figure, conversing apparently only with his Guardian Angel, he was a very practical leader of men. He introduced the Congregation of the Oratory into England and opened his first house in a former gin factory in Birmingham. He had to put up with endless trouble from Frederick Faber, Superior of the more socially acceptable London Oratory. Faber arguably wrote the worst lyrics of any Victorian ("Oh happy psys, oh happy psys, where Jesus doth his dwelling fix") and insisted on calling Mary "Mamma" because he thought this was the Catholic thing. Newman did not share his view that becoming a Catholic meant going Italianate.

Newman also deserves credit for his organizing abilities in getting University College, Dublin off the ground. He left town in two, divided between Dublin and Birmingham. As a convert, he was mistrusted by most of the Irish bishops and had an idea of University which, when they discovered it, was not exactly what they had in mind. He withdrew to the slums of Birmingham. Newman had handsome qualities.

Nor should we picture him as a

withdrawn scholar, endlessly polishing what James Joyce called his "cloistral, silver-veined prose" in comfortable seclusion. Martin points out that nearly all his works were pieces of occasion. He is asked to explain his move from the Anglican Church to the Church of Rome; he writes the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Charles Kingsley, a sanitation-obsessed Victorian worthy, accuses him of encouraging equivocation: he replies with his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Working lengthy hours on his reply to Kingsley, he falls ill, thinks he is going to die and composes his *Dream of Gerontius*. Bored by his Oratorian noviceship in Rome, he writes a novel, *Loss and Gain*, to while away the time. That was in 1848, but he did not admit authorship until 1874, and critics sententiously remarked that he had "sunk lower than Dickens". He never wrote in tranquillity. He was far more engaged than, say, Sartre.

The most tricky topic in any biography of Newman is his conversion to Rome in 1845. At the time it could not be expected to improve Anglican-Catholic relations. Gladstone described it as an event of calamitous importance. There was bitter talk of treachery and betrayal. Young men who followed Newman's example were cut out of will. Yet Martin, himself an Anglican, discreetly suggests that Newman's conversion was in the long term reconciling.

It is worth dwelling on this paradox. Martin is right, I believe, to suggest that Newman's conversion, so bitterly resented at the time, has a positive ecumenical meaning for today. He shows that Newman bore no ill will towards the Church which he had left.

He thought, for example, that the building of a new Catholic church in Oxford — to commemorate the numerous conversions brought about by the Oxford Movement — was unwise and unnecessarily provocative. Unlike Manning, whom he belatedly joined in the college of cardinals, he did not need to denigrate his past ministry in order to justify his present option. He had, us it were, come definitively home from a valid, but somewhat leaky,

temporary shelter. Or, in his own phrase, not quoted by Martin, he exchanged a nurse for a mother. But if Newman had no hostility towards the Church which he had so painfully and so painstakingly left, some of his new brethren regarded him as a crypto-Anglican, or Anglican Trojan Horse. Newman saw nothing to deplore in the loss of the Papal States and regarded the first Vatican Council as thoroughly regrettable (and not merely as inopportune, as legend has it). These were unorthodox opinions in the pontificate of Pius Nine. He had to wait for the next pontificate to get his cardinal's hat. Manning, the complete Ultramontane, said of Newman's version of Catholicism: "It is the old Anglican, patristic, literary Oxford tone transposed into the (Roman Catholic) Church." The ironical truth is that Manning was absolutely right. He was deploing what we, today, can rejoice in: partly thanks to Newman, the Roman Catholic Church has learned something from the approach of the Anglicans, and in order to respond to the challenge of Newman, the Anglican Communion has drawn closer to Rome.

He was the invisible patron of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) which reported earlier this year. Though it never mentioned Newman, it borrowed from him a characteristic title for its response to objections, *Elucidations*; and its eventual conclusion that the Church can do with a "universal primate" to make visible its unity echoes Newman's own personal pilgrimage.

Fifty-four illustrations greatly enhance the book. These earnest Victorians leap out of the pages and come alive. In particular, three portraits of John Henry Newman make one reflect on life and mortality. A miniature by Sir William Ross in 1843 shows a nervous-looking, intense don. His hands are tightly clasped in front of him. He peers out through the round lenses of his spectacles, hardly larger than his eyes. He wears a white tie. His hair is not parted but falls in a forelock



Newman photographed in London in December 1861: reproduced from the book reviewed here.

toward the right. Sir John Mille's portrait of 1881 shows Newman in the splendid crimson robes of a cardinal of the Roman Church. The hair is now white, but the forelock still falls to the right. The tired eyes look out directly — what happened to the spectacles? — with the look of a man who is at peace and in harbour. The feeling of serenity comes out even more in a photograph taken, in 1885, Newman, with a remarkably unlined face for a man of 84, cups his hand behind his ear, as though straining to catch what is being said. He did not like the picture, believing that the slabby coat he happened to be wearing "advertised

his poverty". The white forelock still falls to the right.

Brian Martin has dusted down the portrait of Newman and shown without undue strain his relevance for today. There are two questions to which he cannot give an answer. Was Newman any good on the violin, or was his violin-playing merely therapy? And was he joyful, did he have that quality of *hilaritas* which is required for the process of beatification that is supposed to be progressing? Von Hügel held that Newman was too miserable to be beatified. I suspect that Newman himself might have agreed. "Saints", he wrote, "are not literary men."

Calculated beliefs

W. J. Hollenweger

DAVID B. BARRETT

World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World AD 1900-2000
1009pp. Oxford University Press.
£55.
0 19 572435 6

If we judge the significance of religion on the basis of its importance in our own social context, on the grounds of the available statistics in our own country (or worse within the scope of our personal relationships), this is superbly

demonstrated by David B. Barrett's monumental *World Christian Encyclopedia* with over a thousand tightly printed pages in three columns.

Barrett's factual research, his statistics and tables show that Christianity has been in the twentieth century "the most extensive and universal religion in history". For the first time in history it has become "ecumenical in the literal meaning of the word: its boundaries are coextensive with the *oikoumene*, the whole inhabited world. In two-thirds of the world's 223 countries, Christians now form the majority (over 50%). Nine hundred and ninety million (22.6% of the world's population) are listening regularly to Christian radio and TV.

We have the paradoxical situation that, although the percentage of Christians in the world has fallen regularly since 1900, the outreach, impact and influence of Christianity have risen spectacularly by something like 140%. The dimensions of the unfinished task of world evangelization are in fact very much smaller than contemporary Protestant and Catholic missionary organizations realize.

But this Christianity is a highly complex religion. The forging of the statistical and phenomenological categories, the collection of the fifteen hundred highly informative and unexpected photographs, the minute recording of the history, size and activity of 20,800 denominations in all countries has taken a team of internationally known scholars (not all of them Christians) twelve years. The significance of this diversity will have to be discussed thoroughly in future by Western historians, sociologists and theologians who in general write about the doctrines of Christianity, the history of the Church, on the basis of their almost complete ignorance of what is going on in those parts of the

world where Christianity is not only growing by leaps and bounds but also where it asks other questions and gives different answers from those to which we are accustomed. Barrett describes this as the shifting of the centre of gravity from Europe/America to Africa, Latin America and certain specific countries in Asia. The majority of Christians are now non-white. It is no longer predominantly a white man's religion. The most widely used Christian language is no longer English but Spanish. What a challenge for our departments of theology and religious studies! How are we going to cope with the fact that we have to learn — and learn fast — about the beliefs and theologies of these other Christians if we want to remain in contact with the centre of gravity?

It is precisely the diversity of Christianity which is mainly responsible for this phenomenal growth in the Third World. It allows for better adaptation to local circumstances. (A historical example of this development was, of course, the Church of England, once one of the most indigenous churches of the world.) It has made it far more difficult for hostile regimes to control or suppress Christianity. This is particularly the case for the unrecognized churches in the Soviet Union, but also for many indigenous churches in Africa, eg in Zaïre and South Africa.

David Barrett confesses that one of the more startling findings documented in this survey is the existence of a whole new bloc of global Christianity unrelated to either Western or Eastern Christianity; this is termed here Parts of the have been known realized its formidable, collective size and its immense aggregate size — 82 million affiliated church members in 1980.

and still growing without any significant help from outside.

One of the reasons why they were not known was the fact that they could not be bothered to join any national or even international ecumenical or denominational organization — a problem which will have to preoccupy all those ecumenical agencies which understand themselves as spokesmen for the Christians of the Third World. The majority of these Christians have no wish to be represented by anybody.

It would be tempting to discuss some of the countries in detail, eg Togo, where the Methodist Church is the Established State Church, the Pitcairn Islands, where all inhabitants are Seventh Day Adventists, or even the UK, where one may be astonished to find that Italian is classed as one of its major languages, or the Soviet Union, where there are more Christians than members of the Communist party, or many of the Latin American countries, where indigenous Pentecostals form the second largest denomination, far outnumbering traditional Protestant and Anglican churches.

It would be equally tempting to discuss a number of questions which this statistical review raises. I single out only two:

1. In the twentieth century Christianity is growing in absolute numbers but its proportion in the world population is declining (the same is true of all other major religions). What happens to those who turn their backs on their former religion? It seems to me that this question is not yet fully answered by the statistical survey. France has, for example, 80% Christians, 12% non-religious and only 3% atheists. The UK has 86% Christians, 8.8% non-religious and a meagre 0.7% atheists. There are more Jews in the UK than in the state of Israel. Germany has 64% Christians, 25% non-religious, 11.4% atheists (but a

national income per capita which is higher than the UK). Even the Soviet Union has 36% Christians, 11% Muslim, 29% non-religious and 22% atheists. One of the few really secularized countries seems to be the Peoples' Republic of China, with 60% non-religious, 20% Chinese folk religionists, 12% atheists and only 0.2% Christians. The latter, however, are growing strongly, without missionary help from outside.

Barrett seems to suggest that those who leave their religion turn to what he calls "secularism in its religious form", for which China and the Soviet Union would be examples. To be used validly this expression would need to be expounded and plausibly explained. Barrett is, however, certainly right when he points to a number of newly emerging pseudo-religious beliefs, organizations and liturgies, based on a number of metaphysical systems. Indonesia, with 39% non-religionists, would be a point in case.

2. The obvious question which has to be asked about such an encyclopedia is this: What is its definition of a Christian? Following the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Barrett discusses the question of definition in depth. He uses a number of definitions and therefore comes up with different types of statistics. One of them is to list as Christians those who declare themselves to be Christians (eg, in government censuses). But Barrett also takes into consideration other criteria, such as the statistics of churches, which are in most cases considerably lower than the statistics which are based on the "declared" faith of the population.

This encyclopedia represents a major event in the book market. For a relatively modest price one gets a whole library. In addition to maps, tables and religious statistics, the relevant secular data of each country are listed.

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A. E. Harvey

J. DUNCAN M. DERRETT

The Anastasis: The Resurrection of Jesus as an Historical Event
166pp. P. Drinkwater, Shipton on Stour, Warwickshire. £5.
0 9055751 4

The New Testament gospels continue to present a tantalizing challenge to the ingenuity of their readers. To the believer, the facts they record about Jesus appear substantially true; but the questions raised by the differences between the four narratives, the theological and apologetic interests of the writers, the influence on the narrative of scriptural precedents and prophecies and in general the complex relationship between matters of faith and matters of history are sufficient to occupy the entire working life of any scholar. To the unbeliever, there is the additional factor that in many respects it seems that the evidence of the gospels must be rejected. The claim made for Jesus is false; and many of the narratives, being either "miraculous" or for other reasons historically improbable, must be regarded as simply untrue. There then presents itself the absorbing task of reconstructing what really happened from the suspicious traces which still survive in the gospel accounts.

These problems are presented in an acute form by the Resurrection. That Jesus "rose from the dead" is a matter of faith. It is affirmed again and again by the New Testament writers, but the event itself is never described or explained; only certain historical consequences are recorded - that Jesus' tomb was found to be empty, that he was seen by some of his followers for a certain period after his death, that the sense of defeat and despair caused by the crucifixion was converted into a joyful conviction powerful enough to launch the

movement which became the Christian Church - but even these consequences are attested with a number of baffling inconsistencies and obscurities. A reader who rejects the statement of faith, and who cannot accept any supernatural explanation of the empty tomb and the "resurrection appearances", is faced with a bewildering trail of evidence leading apparently nowhere. To reconstruct what "really" happened he requires an unusual degree of both skill and imagination.

The quest has often been undertaken before. J. Duncan M. Derrett brings to it some significant qualifications. He has made himself an expert, and indeed respected, in the whole field of New Testament studies; he has the linguistic and legal training of a professor of oriental law; he has some personal acquaintance with medical terminology; and he possesses a kind of instinctive sense (due largely to his upbringing in India) of how things are seen and done in any oriental society. His solution is original, arresting and argued with great learning and cogency.

Jesus, after his death, underwent *anastasis*. This (the word first used in our sources rather than the subsequent interpretation of it conveyed by the word "resurrection") means simply that he revived from (apparent) death. Cases of premature burial, and revival after signs of death have been attested, are known from both ancient and modern times, and indeed are one of the reasons why so much medical research has recently been devoted to the diagnosis of death. Jesus' legs (as retold) were not broken. If he revived in the tomb he could have moved sufficiently to attract the attention of the watchers outside (there must have been watchers) and have been escorted to safety. He was just able to utter a kind of gurgling sound which could be represented as "GLYL" and which could be most easily interpreted as "Galilee" ("He shall go before you to Galilee"), though it is subsequently received further interpretation. This

message was entrusted to a young man who, dressed in white for joy, met the woman at the now empty tomb. Subsequently Jesus was also able to perform some sort of commissioning ceremony for his disciples, before his cafébeled condition brought on the inevitable death. But meanwhile his disciples had seen in Jesus' revival clear evidence of the power of God, and had interpreted it (perhaps taught by Jesus himself) as an earnest of the general resurrection of the dead.

In Derrett's expert hands, this hypothesis is arguably one that makes sense of the historical sediment still embedded in the gospel accounts, and explains the evolution of the faith-narratives which subsequently took the place of history. But it leaves, of course, a major question unanswered: what happened to Jesus' body? Derrett sees all too clearly the difficulties of virtually every possible answer. Jesus could not have been hidden or reburied without consequences which would certainly have left their traces in the tradition. By a process of elimination he arrives at the only remaining option: cremation. Totally alien to Jewish practice, and utterly scandalous to Jewish beliefs, a cremation nevertheless would have had some very slight biblical precedent. The disciples, believing their master to be truly "resurrected" already, might have overcome their natural scruples and disposed of the embarrassing, and now theologically insignificant, corpse in the only way practically open to them.

I must not seek to prejudice the reader's reaction to this extraordinary suggestion, which seems hardly, if ever, to have been seriously advanced before; nor to the difficulty of imagining that the lingering life for some thirty-six hours (Derrett's estimate) of a man who could barely speak or walk is the historical germ from which grew the narratives of Jesus' resurrection appearances. I make only a comment on the way the solution is reached. Derrett's whole reconstruction rests upon traces which

ean allegedly still be found in St Mark's gospel, despite the subsequent working-over which the story received at the evangelist's hand. St Mark's gospel, in its original form, stopped short of the events subsequent to the young man's announcement to the women. But the story was taken up by the other gospels. The crucial event, and one which must have been nothing less than traumatic for those of the disciples who were involved (and indeed for the rest when they heard about it) was the cremation of Jesus' body; but this (Derrett admits) has left no trace whatever in the sources. The brilliant detective, when surveying all available clues, may sometimes achieve results by entertaining what seems initially a highly improbable solution; but the solution will begin to gain acceptance as soon as it is seen that it makes sense of hints that had been ignored or misunderstood before. But here there is no hint whatever. Even the detective's greatest admirers may remain unconvinced.

But, as in the best detective stories, the quality of the book does not stand or fall by the plausibility of the solution. Professor Derrett's mastery of his material is unquestionable; it is only sad that he sometimes feels it necessary to refer disparagingly to what may be scholars who combine faith with technical knowledge, even though he accepts unreservedly the work of some of them (as, for instance, when he takes as established a recent suggestion, by o means universally accepted by scholars, that the account of the Empty Tomb in Mark owes its form to supposed ceremonies at an early pilgrimage to Jesus' assumed burial-place). There is much here that will intrigue and stimulate the general reader, as well as much which should be carefully pondered by the professional scholar; the book is unusual, not only in the carefully reasoned ingenuity of its argument, but in the attractive format which his publisher has designed for it, and indeed in its very modest price.

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KAROL WOJTYLA

Collected Poems
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The "official record" of the papal visit this year to Great Britain, compiled by Peter Jennings and Eamonn McCabe, consists very largely of photographs, extracts from the Pope's many speeches and the reactions to the visit of various non-Catholic religious figures, some pretty anodyne, some a little sharper; all this held together by a commentary at times simply factual, at times giving off that slight haze of dishonesty that is perhaps inevitable in any official record of anything. The Pope preached the Catholic faith, as one would expect, though it seems clear that on more than one occasion he would have elicited the response he got, no matter what he had said - when the young people of Scotland had chanted, "John Paul, John Paul", "applauded nearly every sentence of his address" and then sang, "You'll Never Walk Alone", they can scarcely have been disappointed to have been received with such mindless enthusiasm.

Pope John Paul II was at the mercy here of what had been arranged for him, but his difficulty with some of the great crowds assembled before him was as nothing by comparison with the difficulty he was at in the end of his pastoral visit to Great Britain. The Pope listened as the Anglican Primate described himself and the Roman Pontiff as his successors respectively of St Augustine and St Gregory, and although in his reply he was careful to make no reference to the successor of St Augustine, both his silence on the matter and his joining with Dr Runcie in giving the blessing at the end of the service at Canterbury lent credence to a belief which as a Catholic he could not hold, that the Anglican Primate was a priest, and more, a Catholic Archbishop, the fellow of Anselm and Becket and Pole. During the rest of his pastoral visit to Great Britain, the Pope must have strengthened the belief of many Catholics at Canterbury he may well have perplexed the belief of many.

For some leading clerics and leading laymen, of course, it was always the Anglican aspect of the Pope's visit that was most important. The Pope, it was felt, was delivering himself of such harmless spiritual psalm as is the stock-in-trade of the modern clergyman, was to be hoped for a mass of opinions acceptable to all right-thinking men. It is a man of this kind who holds the centre ground in Norman St John-Stevas's biography. The Pope is praised in emphatic terms, but for cheap and vulgar reasons ("the Pope has that indefinable thing, star quality", or for reasons which could not command themselves to a believer as of much importance: as a result of his various journeys and his own "self-projection", we are told, the Pope has become "not only a world leader, but the outstanding world leader of our time" - rather the position the devil was offering Christ by inviting him to jump from the top of the Temple: a pretty piece of self-projection that would have been. Again, as though the Vicar of Christ were some footling politician having his hour, there is the constant assumption that the doctrinal and moral position he expounds is simply his, to be explained by a strict father or a Polish background. In reality, any pope is at the service of the constant teaching and tradition of the Church and, with less room for manoeuvre than a secular commentator might suppose, cannot choose but be a "theological conservative", no matter what the dispositions of his earthly father. Mr St John-Stevas, by contrast, moves in the world of jet-setting Christian personalities doing ceremonial deals and applause; he clearly likes the atmosphere, and the sense of importance: "when the Pope [Paul VI] away from Rome . . . On my arrival at Hong Kong on 7 August, the first thing I noted was that the flags were at half-mast . . . So, I reflected, that great and good man was gone."

The tone of Peter Hebblethwaite's biography is happier and his approach more acute. His first commitment is to a progressive doctrinal position and not to some sentimental feeling for the man who happens to be pope. The freedom this allows him in his contemplation of Pope John Paul II gives an edge of intelligence to his account but the operation of that intelligence is greatly hindered by what is in its turn a profoundly limiting kind of assent to all the progressive Christian notions. There is no hint that other opinions might be possible, no sense that a final adoption of progressive beliefs must have taken seriously the challenge of other possibilities. And so there is no intellectual tension or life, none of the feeling the best books evoke, that the author's chief advance and difficulty is himself; it is the book is largely predictable, and it founders on a question of its own limited grasp: why should a plainly good and attractive Pope not have plainly good and attractive views?

Lord Longford's book is neither sentimental nor a *parti pris* argument. It is written with an unobtrusive affection and admiration for its subject; the tone is not neutral, but it is transparent to the facts of the Pope's life. For the body of the book, the facts and the excellent photographs are allowed to speak for themselves, and they tell an extremely impressive story. Then, in a final chapter, Lord Longford tries to describe more directly what kind of man the Pope is: it is a brief but admirably lucid and subtle account, free of irrelevant secular judgments and measures and of intrusive authorial belief. The merit of this biography is that, as it were, it acknowledges that biography is a skilled and clearly delimited kind of intellectual art, neither the opportunity to argue for one's own belief nor to present one's sense of one's own importance, but demanding, nevertheless in the background the distinctly discernible presence of the writer.

The price of benevolence

David Crane

part of the admiration that many people feel for the Pope, that he has so evidently refused (though with one strange exception) to modify his loyalties. For English Catholics, too, like almost everything else about it; and in other ways, put beside the pre-conciliar missal I still use, this present commemorative volume looks inadequate. In 1040 pages it copes with the bewildering variety of the Sunday liturgy in the now simplified rites, with a few very short and inadequate notes. In twice the number of pages my own missal sets out the whole of the allegedly more complex pre-conciliar liturgy of the Mass, Sundays and weekdays, with abundant doctrinal, liturgical, spiritual and historical commentary. My missal is designed to last until it finally falls to pieces; this new one will last, according to the accompanying leaflet, "for the foreseeable future", which if the experience of the past ten years is any guide means about three years. My missal tells you, completely reliably, what to expect when the priest goes up to the altar; the new one gives you a text and a set of actions that might with luck bear some relation to what happens when the presiding minister goes to the eucharistic table.

They have taken away the language of the Church, the Pope is no better than any modern cleric. There was produced for his visit a special commemorative edition of the New Sunday Missal in the reformed Catholic rite. It certainly looks rather more dignified and permanent than most modern service books, and the publishers are proud of this, though unreasonably aware that liturgical experts do not, in fact, much care for laymen using missals: it prevents "participation" and - imposes rigid expectations on the liturgy. The man in the pew might come to think that the

prayer book he paid so much for ought to give him some idea of what is going to be said and done. So the status of the missal in the new liturgy is uncertain, like almost everything else about it; and in other ways, put beside the pre-conciliar missal I still use, this present commemorative volume looks inadequate. In 1040 pages it copes with the bewildering variety of the Sunday liturgy in the now simplified rites, with a few very short and inadequate notes. In twice the number of pages my own missal sets out the whole of the allegedly more complex pre-conciliar liturgy of the Mass, Sundays and weekdays, with abundant doctrinal, liturgical, spiritual and historical commentary. My missal is designed to last until it finally falls to pieces; this new one will last, according to the accompanying leaflet, "for the foreseeable future", which if the experience of the past ten years is any guide means about three years. My missal tells you, completely reliably, what to expect when the priest goes up to the altar; the new one gives you a text and a set of actions that might with luck bear some relation to what happens when the presiding minister goes to the eucharistic table.

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Catholics used to use to worship God; but the new words and ceremonies, we are assured, are saying the same things. They must be either fools or knaves if they believe that. Let me take as a non-liturgical example the volume of the Pope's *Collected Poems* in Jerzy Peterkiewicz's English translation. No doubt, in some utterly uninteresting sense, they say the same as they said in Polish, but what they have lost is everything that made them poetry, everything that made them memorable or that alerted or fired the mind of the reader. I have put them on the shelf next to the new missal, and will open neither book again. The Pope ought to be made to throw away his Polish version, and ought to be forbidden to speak Polish ever again; and then he would remember what it feels like to be denied the ceremonies of the Church in which one has been brought up.

A Way of Life: Being a Catholic Today edited by David Miles Board (208pp. Collins. £7.95. 0 00 59705 4) surveys the Catholic Church in England and Wales through news reports, specialized articles, and reference information, covering worship, ecumenism, missions, the clergy, marriage, education, social involvement, and spiritual understanding.

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From militancy to mildness

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PETER HOLMES

Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics
279pp. Cambridge University Press.
£22.50.
0 521 24343 2

What, another book on Elizabethan Catholicism? Yes, and a good one. Readers who doubted, as I did, whether there was much more to be said on the subject, particularly this aspect of it, will be quickly reassured. Peter Holmes opens up new territory, re-charts the old, challenges and corrects several previous maps.

The point of the book is to show how complex and inconsistent were the political attitudes of Elizabethan Catholics. Like German Lutherans in the first half of the sixteenth century and French Huguenots in the second, they zigzagged continually between loyalty and resistance.

Briefly, the story is this. For the first ten years after the new Protestant regime was set up, English Catholics,

like a group of vociferous exiles in Louvain, while denouncing the religious settlement in their homeland, none the less preached secular loyalty and non-resistance. In temporal matters, they claimed, the Queen would find that Catholics made model subjects and citizens. It was Protestantism which was the mother of mischief – overturning the old order and old decencies, and above all, preaching sedition. Look at Frai (and soon the Netherlands). Read Knox. Read Goodman and Ponet – English Protestants who had blazed away against Mary Tudor and taught rebellion. And so on.

Then, in 1569, came a sudden change. With the Northern Rising, followed by Elizabeth's excommunication, loyaltyism gave way to theory of resistance, a turnabout epitomized by *De visibili monarchia*, 1571, of Nicholas Sander, a leading Louvainist. For five years, religious disobedience cohabited with secular disobedience. By 1574, however, the two were drifting apart. The failure of political action and William Allen's decision to send his seminary priests to England required that recusancy return to its former partner, loyaltyism. Sander and his like were silenced. A famous book

nicknamed "Bristow's Motives" preached obedience despite Elizabeth's excommunication; and for the next ten years Catholics kept to strictly non-political writings, such as catechisms, prayer manuals and similar works.

Loyallism in temporals came to a climax with the arrival of the Jesuits in 1580. Campion and Persons insisted that their purpose was purely spiritual, continually stressed their devotion to Elizabeth, they flattered her. Allen and the seminarists followed suit. Given the circumstances – plots, Philip II and all the rest of it – Campion and the others were naive to think that the government would believe them and accept the advanced idea that religious recusancy could go hand in hand with secular obedience. But, as P. McGrath justly remarked several years ago, it was no less unfair of Cecil and Co to try to label all Catholics as traitors – which, predictably and skilfully, they did. William Allen was surely right when he said that, since no one would or could argue that the ancient religion was heresy, the charge of treason was the only way of discrediting Catholicism; and it also had the advantage of allowing Protestants to say that no one was being persecuted for his religious beliefs.

Obedience of Elizabethan Catholics broke under the strain of persecution, as it did so often elsewhere. The desire for revenge could not be contained. Force would be met by force. Allen's *A true, shure and modest defence of English Catholics* and Persons's *Private Eye-type Leicester's Commonwealth* signalled the new mood.

The "bloody questions" it may be observed, drove Catholics into active disobedience as surely as Elizabeth's treatment of the more zealous Protestants engendered increasingly militant Puritanism. Dr Holmes argues that events in France were no less important. The death of the last Valois heir in 1584 left Catholics facing the prospect of a heretic ascending the throne and in turn recreated the Catholic League, which promptly took up the doctrines of resistance and tyrannicide that Huguenots had until recently espoused (but now discreetly buried).

English Catholicism followed French into populist theories of "ascending" political power, contractual kingship (exemplified by the coronation oath), the right of resistance and so on. Sander and other Jesuits returned to the attack. Persons gave Catholics their most radical view of things in his *Conference concerning the next succession* of 1596, which attributed to the community the right to elect and depose the ruler.

So Catholic resistance theories were tough and hard-line all right. But there was one most interesting fact about them. Though they asserted the right of pope and king of Spain to crusade against England, they never took the ultimate step of calling upon the English to rebel; and they also stopped short of proclaiming the papal deposing power. Hence the paradox (noted by Holmes): it was not during the reign of excommunicated Elizabeth but under James I, whom no pope had directly threatened, that the deposing power became a burning issue.

Persons's *Conference* was the last blast of defiance. Events in France, growing anti-Spanish and anti-Jesuit sentiments, especially of the Appellants (locked in acrid squabbles with Persons and his supporters over the appointment of an archbishop to oversee the English mission), brought non-resistance theory to the fore again. Elizabeth became gracious queen once more, her persecution mild. Her patriotic Catholic subjects sought toleration – some being prepared to get Rome to remove Jesuits from England as part of the bargain. And even Persons turned over a new leaf, replacing militancy with mildness.

After two periods of loyaltyism interrupted by two periods of resistance, therefore, loyaltyism had finally come out on top, a fact which Robert Cecil and James I were quick to exploit and which helps us to put that last example of desperate violence, the Gunpowder Plot, into final perspective.

Such is the main drift of this exceedingly interesting, taut, lucid book. There are several minor themes. For example, there are intriguing accounts of maverick Catholics who defied the official line and argued that it was permissible to attend Protestant services and outwardly conform, and of others who were of phase with the majority and preached obedience when the latter were on the resistance run – and vice versa. Holmes also summarizes the contents of his excellent edition for the Catholic Record Society of casuistical writings which show how, even at their most defiant, Allen and Persons allowed concessions to Catholic layfolk, including occasional conformity, to avoid detection and ruin, as well as permitting priests to disguise, equivocate and bend bits of canon law here and there.

A few comments suggest themselves. First, "resistance" is a sometimes rather elusive word. Apparently it can be as little as not singing Elizabeth's praises or being rude about her favourite – and as much

as calling upon foreign powers to invade her land. Perhaps there should be some distinctions, some gradations. Secondly, since resistance theories were so muted and cautious (Persons and Allen never thundered as Protestants Beza or Hotman thundered, and, as noted already, they never called up the Excoets), the pendulum swings between obedience and resistance were not as wide as a quick reading of this book might suggest. Holmes carefully shows how un-extreme most Catholics usually were. He insists that loyaltyism was the norm. He points out that the Counter-Reformation as a whole was increasingly monarchical and conservative in mood. Yes, as a matter of fact. But is it right to say that its ideology was? Victoria, Suarez, Bellarmine *et al* cannot be set aside thus (even though Bellarmine got into trouble for conceding too much to the state). Holmes has important points to make about the dangers of a crude division between clerical and "seigneurial" Catholicism. But I wonder if he would accept that not all who sought toleration were, so to speak, implicitly admitting defeat thereby. Some Catholics always believed that if the old faith was allowed its head (and allowed to be heard) it would beat out the heretics hands down. For them toleration was the high road to victory. Loyallism thus becomes the highest form of resistance.

One can, of course, speculate endlessly about what exactly occasioned the oscillations between obedience and resistance which Holmes has so deftly analysed – as about the extent to which they were merely opportunistic. As against Holmes's theory, for instance, I like the recent suggestion that it was the apparent failure of the Campion approach which convinced Persons that awe and light would not work – rather than, say, events in France. I wonder, indeed, whether Persons had ever been an enthusiast for loyaltyism. And while I am on Persons, may I comment that I do not quite see why his "Memorial of the Reformation of England" of 1596 represents a retreat from former belligerence by a new-look Person?

This truly remarkable sketch of the post-Reformation situation which would follow England's return to the fold did not, I agree, "set out resistance theory or discuss the conquest of England". But should we expect it to have done? And the fact that it was never published proves what? Only, I think, that Persons did not want to give hostages to fortune or new sticks for his many opponents to use on him and the Society. But I have learnt so much from Dr Holmes that I would probably do well to pipe down.

MEDIEVAL STUDIES

Image and likeness

Brian Stock

KARL MORRISON

The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West
440pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.
0 691 05350 2

Medievalists in our time, with rare exceptions, have shown little enthusiasm for crossing the boundaries of their discipline's specialities. They have thereby helped to perpetuate the outdated but still prevalent idea that the Middle Ages contributed little to the development of broader intellectual problems in the West.

Karl Morrison's study of the concepts of mimesis and reform between the Greeks and the later nineteenth century provides a refreshing contrast to this general trend. On the whole, his is a reflective study, more concerned with linking a group of authors in a consistent chain of reasoning than with re-creating a few decisive transformations in philosophical taste. The book is not a comprehensive survey but a set of variations around a theme. Rather than merely accumulating detail, each chapter asks the volume's central question anew.

Morrison's argument, *in nuce*, is that the principle which Erich Auerbach defined as the aesthetics of mimesis not only furnished a renewable stylistic strategy for Western literature and art, but from a historical point of view, also underlay entire systems of thought, including cosmology, epistemology and ethics. Morrison proposes that the notion of mimesis, despite a long, complex and often contradictory career, united within a single, expanding corpus of literary

possibilities the thought of such diverse figures as Philo and Paul, Augustine and Gregory the Great, Hume and Herder, and Plus IX and Dilthey.

The book is organized chronologically, and proceeds in three major sections devoted respectively to the Ancient World, the Middle Ages and the period between 1500 and 1900. However, Morrison's intention is not to reduce his theme to a series of formulae originating in ancient philosophy and subsequently reapplied in a linear fashion, but rather to illustrate, as he puts it, the "interweaving and ramifications of options, some apparent from an early time, others introduced along the way". His is therefore a "history of versions", a phrase which recalls Auerbach, and beyond him, Vico, as well as the rhetorical analyses of Hayden White. In an appendix Morrison also acknowledges a debt to two influential earlier studies of the theme, Charles Trinkaus's *In Our Image and Likeness* and Gerhard Ladoer's magisterial *The Idea of Reform*.

The result is a portrait of the mimetic tradition that is philosophically accurate, but, perhaps owing to the breadth of Morrison's interests, occasionally historically distorted. Cesser thinkers, like Kierkegaard and Corbette, even where their influence is well attested, are omitted as are the intertext, often conflicting traditions arising out of major figures themselves. We have a lengthy treatment of Augustine's thoughts on mimesis, and to Morrison's credit, as the medievalist rather than the ancients would have understood them; but there is no discussion of the liberal versus conservative Augustinianism of the Carolingian age, which, as much as doctrinal views, is what separates two of Morrison's representative authors from that period, Radbert and

Eriugena. We therefore have no satisfactory explanation of why Eriugena crops up so persistently, and often in an Augustinian context, at later moments in the history of mimesis, such as Eckhart, Nicolas of Cusa, Jacob Boehme and Hegel. On other occasions avenues of discussion are opened but not followed up. In place of a full exposition of Augustine's ideas on language – prolegomena, in my view, to an appreciation of such topics as "thinking about thinking" and "analogy and allegory" – we find only a lengthy note, recalling secondary literature, on the theory of signs. Hence, a consideration of St Anselm, whose linguistic approach to the problem of man's image and likeness of his maker brought about a revolution in early scholastic thought, is effectively prevented. Again, despite a fair outline of St Thomas's thoughts, no awareness is demonstrated of the actual uses (or non-uses) put to Aquinas' ideas in fifteenth and sixteenth-century schools of theology, on which P. O. Kristeller has written so eloquently.

A central strength of Morrison's book arises from the fact that, although it is in large part a study of medieval cultural survival it does not base itself on over-generalizations about "the medieval mind" or other assumptions about the presumed consistency of medieval thought. As a consequence, the analyses reach out to several branches of modern thought at once. Among such relationships, for example, Morrison points out that the concept of mimesis, as mystically interpreted by Eckhart and others, paved the way for many controversial politico-theological ideas in the nineteenth century, such as "the divinization of change through the 'spirit of the age' or the 'spirit of the people'". The extinction of the individual moral personality, [and] the concept of the

historical process as something made by man".

But a central weakness arises from the treatment of the Middle Ages itself. Morrison virtually leaps from the Carolingian age to St Thomas, leaving only "strategic reorientations" for the three centuries which, in the eyes of many, saw the West's major fusion of ideas about mimesis and pragmatic approaches to reform, a point of view developed along different lines by R. Javelet, M.-D. Chenu and Sir Richard Southern. The problem is not only the omission of major figures at a theoretical level, such as Hugh of St Victor or Alan of Lille, but of failing to realize that, in later medieval society, in which many types of change were going on all at once, pure ideas were only one means of expression among others. This was, in fact, Europe's first large-scale laboratory for testing out the practicality of imitative and reformist notions. The Gregorian and anti-Gregorian publicists fought over what reform really meant, while, at a

more pragmatic level, orthodox and heretical religious movements implemented a wide variety of institutional changes designed to bring about a closer approximation to the apostolic life. The period's most dynamic movements – the Cistercians, the Carthusians, the Augustinian canons and the numerous sects for women – all felt some sort of imbalance between nature and art, which, Morrison correctly observes, lay at the heart of the Christian mimetic tradition, and which an ameliorative reformist strategy was to correct.

The question which this fascinating book will leave in many readers' minds is whether, in the Middle Ages at least, ideas and movements can ever really be completely divorced, and whether, if we are to give an adequate historical context to modern ideological controversies, we must not look beyond the elegant syntheses of great thinkers and at the ideas, rituals and symbols motivating the behaviour of ordinary men and women.

Monastic model

Jeremy Catto

L. C. HECTOR and BARBARA HARVEY (Editors)

The Westminster Chronicle 1381-1394
563pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £48.
0 19 823255 6

Richard II's reign was the Indian summer of the English monastic chronicle. Born of the Benedictine marriage to property and secular power, its thousand years of development were the witness of monks' involvement with "the world": the fortunes of royal and noble patrons, the demands of popes and hierarchies, laws and privileges, land, even the weather, the stuff of monastic history as of monastic life. There was of course development, from bare chronological summary to the literary portraits of William of Malmesbury and the inspired gossip of Orderic Vitalis, until, about 1300, the genre seemed to have run its course, winding down in a series of dull and impersonal annals. Monks were by then no longer the vanguard of learning, and their place at the elbow of kings and ministers had been usurped by the friars.

The best fourteenth-century historians were professional men like the author of the *Life of Edward II*, or poets like Froissart. Thae at the end of the century, without much warning, monks resumed control of the historical record. This time their chronicles were anything but impersonal: lively, opinionated, sometimes libellous narratives from Thomas Walsingham at St Albans, Henry Knighton at Leicester Abbey, and from the monk (or monks) of Westminster whose *Chronicle*, first printed by Lumby in the Rolle Series in 1886, is now excellently re-edited and for the first time translated by the late L. C. Hector and Barbara Harvey. Most of the human drama of Richard II's turbulent reign – the affecting scene of the adolescent Richard talking control of the mob during the Peasants' Revolt, his attempt to impale the Archbishop of Canterbury on his sword as their larks passed on the Appellant lords – in 1388 is derived from their often lurid pens.

This curious phase of monastic and literary history has never been fully explained. Now we have some new light on it, for the problem of authorship of the *Westminster Chronicle* has been brought as close as it will ever be to a solution: the candidates authoritatively preferred by the editors are Richard of Cirencester for 1381-83, and ex-prior Richard Bower for 1383-94. Cirencester is known as a third stylist and a compiler of an unfinished history of England; Bower, a twelfth-century monk, wrote nothing else but left a significant legal and historical legacy. If these identifications are correct, as

Westminster Chronicle was the work of a new monastic type. The new model had been to a university: both authors were Oxford graduates. Like his secular contemporaries, he was trained to be businesslike. The monks of the late fourteenth century had remarkable success in the king's service, and an Abbot of Westminster had even been Treasurer of England. The chroniclers, as their work shows, had a wide network of friends outside the cloister, strategically placed in Chancery or the royal household. They were perfectly at home with the details of parliamentary statutes, diplomatic manoeuvres and the complicated affairs of the City of London. If the new monk was not forgetful of religious duty, his devotions were quiet and discreet, avoiding pious exhibitionism. Above all, he had a broad acquaintance with the humanities. If Richard Exeter had read the books in his library he would have known the story of the Trojan war as well as Chaucer, and would even have some ideas, through Marco Polo, of the East. Here then on the surface is a discreetly anonymous chronicle, a naive amateur continuation of Higden's *Polychronicon*; in reality, a work of literature, or at least of the higher journalism, but unvarnished. If Higden was a fading influence, Comynnes was just around the corner.

In fact the *Chronicle's* unvarnished form is an advantage. Thanks to careful editorial work the mechanics of the making of a chronicle can now be examined. The only manuscript is neither a first draft nor a final copy, and is in the hand of its second author, presumably Richard Exeter. He copied first the work of Richard of Cirencester, adding a few personal touches, and then an earlier draft of his own: stop-press items, afterthoughts and observations found a place in the margin. The centrepiece of his work is the history of the savage judicial murders of 1388, the best account we have of the Appellants' crisis. It can now be seen in the making. Among the materials the chronicler used were correspondence, including newsletters, party propaganda "schedules" and a "Process", or a sort of official control of the mob during the Peasants' Revolt, his attempt to impale the Archbishop of Canterbury on his sword as their larks passed on the Appellant lords – in 1388 is derived from their often lurid pens.

This is a literary as well as a historical gem. A delightfully produced by the Clarendon Press in an invaluable series, it is regrettable that the publisher's determined decision to set a few copies as possible, have priced it at £48. It is a pity that so many of these better than so many of the

Flawed monarch

G. W. S. Barrow

NORMAN MACDOUGALL

James III: A Political Study
338pp. Edinburgh: John Donald.
£16.
0 85976 078 2

The solid merit of this book consists in its stripping away the embroidery and invention with which writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries dressed up to the reign of James III and effectively obscured it from the view of posterity. Norman MacDougall had already shown the way in a number of important articles, but here we see the work of criticism and interpretation filled out with ample detail, and above all rounded off by a coherent and intelligible, yet withal strongly personal, portrait of what has hitherto been the most puzzling Stewart reign. Here is a strictly political study of James III based on the contemporary sources, accompanied by a judgment which is not so very different from the edicts of earlier scholars. On August 3, 1460 King James III, attempting to recover Roxburgh castle from English occupation, "unhappily was slain with one gun the quilibit brak in the firing, for the quilibit was great delour throu all Scotland". But the delour is not shared by Dr MacDougall, for whom neither James II nor his son can merit any word of praise. Valuable as the author's critical approach undoubtedly is for a period where previous historians have tended to be too credulous or merely too lazy, this has been written by a prosecuting counsel rather than a judge. MacDougall's bias begins early with a strong attack on James II and is sustained until the very end with a conclusion which itemizes in textbook fashion the "five fatal flaws" in his son James III, qualities and defects with which future examiners are going to become all too familiar.

The strictures against the two Jameses suffer from two weaknesses. In the first place, the detailed charges do not always stand up to examination. Secondly, and perhaps more seriously, MacDougall nowhere stands back from the figures of the accused to compare them with their contemporary rulers in Scotland, England, France or Burgundy. Most of us, if suddenly transported into fifteenth-century Europe, would find it impossible to like more than a tiny minority of its inhabitants; the vast majority would strike us as greedy, cruel, vindictive, credulous, cowardly and mean-spirited beyond belief. When a relatively sober and neutral contemporary writer tells us that the nation mourned the death of James II we may find it hard to share

the grief but we must nevertheless take his statement seriously.

As to detail, we may note one or two of MacDougall's *parti pris* verdicts. James II's attempt to "conquer" the Isle of Man was "blatant aggression", because the lordship of Man had been vested in the Stanley family since the reign of Henry IV (of England). Vested by whom? MacDougall says nothing of the Treaty of Perth (1266) by which Man had been acquired by the Scottish crown, or of the Treaty of Edinburgh (1328) by which Scottish rights to Man had been acknowledged by England. But James II incurs further condemnation from MacDougall for his insults and injuries towards the king of Denmark and Norway over the issue of the Northern Isles, since James, like many of his predecessors, had defaulted on an annual payment due to Norway under the Treaty of Perth. Heads MacDougall wins, tails the Stewart kings lose. Again, the frequent aggression of James III is exemplified, we are told, by the king's compelling the earl of Angus to surrender the barony of Cluny to David Crichton, although Angus had already tried to sell Crichton the barony. But if the barony was held in chief of the crown one subject-superior could not alienate it to another without first surrendering it to the Crown. In this instance, as in others, the author's eagerness to pile up incriminatory evidence overshoots the mark.

F. R. H. Du Boulay's phrase about fifteenth-century England, "An Age of Ambition", can be to some extent applied to contemporary Scotland. The centre sees the first "royal burghs" officially so styled, the first archbishops of St Andrews and Glasgow, the first dukedom for a private subject, the first "peerage" in the modern sense, when "lords of parliament" gained social equality with the old earls and provincial lords. The Stewart kings too were affected by ambition. It can hardly be said that James III was any worse in this respect than his grandfather, father, son, or, at certain crucial moments in his reign, his judgment was faulty. Yet he survived the overwhelmingly ambitious 1482-83, and died fairly be said to have been unlucky in the rebellion of 1488 which carried him off. Just as parliament said leonically that he "happit to be slane" on the field of Stirling (Sauchieburn), so it may be argued that James chanced to alienate an ill-assorted but temporarily strong minority of the baronage luckily in possession of the youthful heir to the throne. If this scholarly study proves anything, it proves that throughout the James III period, for almost a century from James I's return from captivity to the battle of Flodden, the mobility of the Stewart monarchy was subject to astonishingly little challenge.

Tradition and rumour

Caroline Bingham

PLANTAGENET and FIONA SOMERSET FRY

The History of Scotland
246pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£8.95.
0 7100 9001 3

The authors have addressed their concise *History of Scotland* to readers thus previously acquainted with the subject, and their narrative is suitably clear, straightforward and unpretentious.

"A nation's history is shaped by its geography", they remark in their first chapter; a nation's historiography is constantly reshaped by research and reinterpretation. An important purpose of a new *History of Scotland* is to present the results of these processes, and not merely to re-chronicle established facts. The Somerset Frys' narrative, however, is unusually balanced between traditionalist and revisionist views of Scottish history.

The preliminary chapter on the prehistory of Scotland contains information which will surprise readers familiar with the long-accepted view of the early Scottish people.

The new date for Maes Howe [chambered tomb in Orkney] ... puts it several hundred years before the great Pyramids of Egypt, and so the technology to build it cannot have been diffused from Egypt, nor indeed from anywhere else in the Near East since the Pyramids were the first stone buildings in that region.

The central chapters, dealing with medieval Scotland, show less awareness of historiographical progress. For example, David II, son of Robert the Bruce, has been the subject of considerable revisionism in recent years. He is no longer universally condemned as the worthless son of his heroic father, but the authors present the traditionally condemnatory view of him. Similarly, they tell the traditional story of a power struggle between the Crowe and the Nobility during the fifteenth century, yet present the early Jameses as have governed as vigorously as they did (especially considering how disadvantaged they were by royal minorities) had they not enjoyed a high proportion of aristocratic support.

Which interpretation the authors themselves support remains uncertain. There seems little point in their treating the sixteenth-century Scottish Mary, Queen of Scots, as imprisoned in Lochleven Castle in 1567 "she either miscarried or gave birth to a premature baby ... According to one rumour, Mary had a daughter who became a nun in France." The tragic reality was that Mary miscarried of "deux enfants" which were stillborn.

The same consideration applies to the revival of the rumour that James VI and I, described here as "a reasonably strong and fit man", might have been poisoned by his favourite, Buckingham, in March 1625. James had suffered appalling ill-health since 1618, as the detailed notes kept by his physician, Dr Mayerne, prove, and Buckingham had no motive to hasten his end. The inclusion of these rumours, presumably, for the sake of drama, detracts from an otherwise sensible narrative.

The final chapter, which covers the period 1770-1980, is thematically arranged, and gives a prompt presentation of the trends, without leading up to the present, without attempting a convincing narrative, and by an intelligent method of dealing with a complex period in a short volume.

This attractively written book stimulates the interest of many readers new to the subject, as it is intended to be. It is unfortunate, therefore, that it is so badly written. The authors have no attempt to conceal the difficulties of his subject, and declares that "the final chapter, which covers the period 1770-1980, is thematically arranged, and gives a prompt presentation of the trends, without leading up to the present, without attempting a convincing narrative, and by an intelligent method of dealing with a complex period in a short volume."

James Campbell, Patrick Wormald and Eric John have written what they describe at the outset as a "brief interpretative account of Anglo-Saxon history". This means, in effect, that they need not burden the text with too much narrative, and are enabled instead to discuss the issues that interest them most, leaving the reader with little opportunity to relax to the recitation of familiar events but ensuring at the same time that his concentration will be well rewarded. They assume responsibility for successive sections of the period, and while each inevitably adopts a different approach (determined in part by the respective concerns of the authors, but also by the changing possibilities of the subject), it must be said that their book is the more enjoyable as a result.

James Campbell covers the darkest period of all, from the end of Roman Britain to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons in the seventh century. He shows how the Anglo-Saxons, who had been a "pagan, heathen, and lawless" people, were transformed into a "Christian, law-abiding, and civilized" people.

Stirring the pot

Simon Keynes

JAMES CAMPBELL, PATRICK WORMALD and ERIC JOHN

The Anglo-Saxons
222pp. Phaidon. £16.50.
0 7148 2149 7

The Sutton Hoo helmet, which confronts the reader on the dust-jacket of this book, is a fitting symbol of our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon England: a few corroded fragments pieced together with a mixture of expertise and ingenuity, given shape by large expanses of modern plaster, covering a human face which cannot be seen. The symbolism applies equally to modern studies of Anglo-Saxon history. In the Anglo-Saxons, the fragments of evidence are handled with due care and attention, and many choice examples are illustrated; moreover, each of the three authors is a dab hand with the plaster, and the shape that emerges is original, and in the best of good taste.

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certainty in history and who like to feel the ground firmly under their feet are best advised to study some other period". Those who wish to see a skilful historian practising his craft are advised to stay with him. He extracts what he can, and no more than he should, from the scanty written sources, provides a sympathetic assessment of the archaeological record, and does not duck when the two types of evidence seem to collide. He pronounces judiciously on a variety of traditional issues, and makes issues of subjects that have traditionally been taken for granted. His suggestions concerning the internal organization of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms are particularly interesting and point to a degree of royal control that many may find surprising.

As we pass into the eighth century, written evidence becomes more plentiful, and Patrick Wormald is quick to seize the opportunities presented. The tone of writing at once becomes more confident and assertive; while Campbell felt he could only guess at what the culture of early Christian kings was like, Wormald writes two pages later of the "highly dramatic cultural changes" that followed the conversion. The superlatives begin to flow thick and fast, so much so that one appears at times to be reading a Guinness Book of Historical Records; but if Wormald's exposition carries one along on the crest of a wave, the currents underneath are not overlooked. His chapter on "The Age of Bede and Aethelbald" explores the tensions that arose between the Church and the secular authorities as their respective areas of interest became increasingly entwined in the first half of the eighth century. One suspects, of course, that such problems are of more concern to the modern historian than they ever were to the average Anglo-Saxon, but when the sources are so scanty, proceedings and law codes, not shopping lists and laundry bills, the modern historian has but little choice. In his chapter on "The Age of Offa and Alcuin" Wormald shows how the Anglo-Saxons, who had been a "pagan, heathen, and lawless" people, were transformed into a "Christian, law-abiding, and civilized" people.

supremacy, and it is good to see that Offa's successor Cenulf receives the attention he deserves. Wormald's treatment of the later ninth century is also full of interest, and it is significant that he resists the temptation to label it "The Age of Alfred": for he provides a valuable assessment of the achievements of Alfred's immediate predecessors as kings of Wessex, and appreciates the dangers of viewing the period exclusively from a West Saxon perspective. Alfred's own achievement, however, is in no way belittled as a result.

Eric John completes the survey of the Anglo-Saxon period with a spirited discussion of the tenth and eleventh centuries. He moves where appropriate in the exalted company of kings and archbishops, but he is also able to address himself more closely than his co-authors to matters such as the political importance of powerful families, the complexities of government and the structure of society. His chapters are enlivened by controversial statements and arresting insights: "Anglo-Saxons at the highest level were accustomed to take decisions of the most serious import at drinking sessions, the frequency of which helps explain why this was such a violent society." The book is more argumentative than interpretative, and it is when the pot is being stirred so vigorously that one needs some prior knowledge of the subject to appreciate what is at stake. Nothing much hangs in this context on the statement that Aethelfred was the first in England to compile a Latin grammar, though it is fortunate that the book does not purport to be a history of Anglo-Saxon scholarship. Elsewhere one finds that a post-Quenest Latin interpolation in a manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is cited as "it" (it was a contemporary English text, it was a "more serious" consequence, but such alterations are uncommon).

The Anglo-Saxons is not a work that seeks to take stock of all knowledge of the subject, but one calculated instead to arouse "interest and provoke thought. It succeeds in this, and in a lively and an excellent selection of text and an excellent selection of

the Anglo-Saxons is not a work that seeks to take stock of all knowledge of the subject, but one calculated instead to arouse "interest and provoke thought. It succeeds in this, and in a lively and an excellent selection of text and an excellent selection of

For lack of a rationale

Philippa Foot

SAMUEL SCHEFFLER

The Rejection of Consequentialism: A Philosophical Investigation of the Considerations Underlying Rival Moral Conceptions
133pp. Oxford University Press. £9. 0 19 824637 9

In this book Samuel Scheffler discusses topics of great practical and theoretical interest. For what is at stake is the validity of some very important moral judgments on the one hand and, on the other, the tenability of moral theories of a generally utilitarian form. If we insist on a consequentialist moral theory the judgments are threatened: if we insist on the judgments the theory is at risk. Can the two be reconciled by some new twist of consequentialist reasoning? And if not, what is someone to do if he is convinced, as many philosophers are, that utilitarianism in one form or another is the only rational basis for morality? Is he to abandon intuitively compelling moral judgments or is he to put up with an apparent lack of theory? Scheffler considers two classes of judgments which seem to clash with consequentialism. In one case he is willing to accept consequentialism if necessary; in the other he believes that the moral code must itself be changed, because "no principled motivation" can be found for maintaining its teaching.

The first class of moral judgments have to do with the claims that an individual's private life has against a consequentialist morality. We are inclined to believe that if someone is

innocently following his own ends he is not automatically open to a charge of acting wrongly whenever it would have been possible for him to do more good by concerning himself with an impersonally valuable end such as the general happiness. Nor does it seem possible to resolve this obstacle to consequentialism by tinkering with the supposed components of the good. Scheffler believes that any agent does indeed have the prerogative of following his own ends in some cases of this kind, and he thinks he can find a rationale for retaining this judgment. The rationale for a moral code which allows agents a certain latitude for going ahead with their own projects although a more optimistic course of action is open to them is, he thinks, to be found in the fact that human beings are independent centres of agency and desire. He is inclined to jettison consequentialism at this point because it seems to him not reasonable to demand of human agents that they should divert energy and attention away from the ends they naturally have whenever they find that an impersonal calculus of good would suggest this course. He is also impressed by Bernard Williams's idea that personal integrity depends on allegiance to personal aims and commitments as well as to the overall good.

To anyone not deeply imbued with a consequentialist philosophy Scheffler's conclusion will seem correct. It is one of the odder results of consequentialism that the only reason anyone is ever justified in following up what he is interested in, or in doing what he simply wants to do, is that he can produce more good, impersonally measured, that way than by doing anything else. At this point consequentialism in all its forms stands in radical opposition to, eg. an

Aristotelian type of moral theory in which the virtues are central, and whose starting point is not the postulation of some general impersonal good but that "rightness" is to be determined. Benevolence may be given a place in such a scheme without being given unlimited authority over action, and justice, while it limits the pursuit of personal objectives, does not speak either for or against a great many actions of everyday life. What seems strange about Scheffler's arguments, and those of many who argue in similar ways, is, perhaps, that these arguments are thought necessary. This is one of the points at which we see how deeply but questionably consequentialist the thinking of most contemporary moral philosophers has become.

If Scheffler's tolerance for what he calls "agent-centred prerogatives" is congenial to common sense, this cannot be said of his treatment of the second class of moral judgments threatened by consequentialist theories. For here he rejects the judgments rather than the theory, finding no basis for some moral beliefs to which most people are very strongly attached. The question here is about the moral status of *rights*, and a special question is raised about intuitions which tell us that no one may be killed, say, or tortured for the general good.

The issues here are complex, having to do with such things as the distinction between the right not to be interfered with and the right to be given aid. Scheffler says on this subject that he does not see how one killing could be held to be a "worse thing to happen" than five deaths, and he therefore lays himself open to the charge of countenancing obviously monstrous things like the inducing of cancer in a few friendless infants in order that a

cure for cancer should be found. A great deal in our common morality hangs on maintaining as morally relevant the distinction between, eg. killing the infants, and allowing the cancer patients to die through lack of a cure for the disease.

The position that we take up on this kind of case is clearly of the utmost practical importance. Nevertheless it is not quite here that consequentialism and common morality conflict most inescapably from a theoretical point of view. For revisionist utilitarians may argue (as a rather desperate measure) that the infringement of rights through actual killing could be counted as a special evil and weighed very heavily in the calculation of good and evil in an action and its results. The debate may, however, then be shifted to another type of example which Scheffler regards as decisive for his point of view. Suppose, he suggests, that the alternatives were not killing a few to save many but rather to prevent many from being killed, and we may add, as Scheffler does, not that the same question will arise about torturing or any other horrible action. The alternative outcomes might then be that a few were killed or tortured by the agent considering what to do, or that many were killed or tortured by someone else. Scheffler favours the view that in such a case it must be right to kill or torture the few, so as to produce the lesser rather than the greater evil – less killing or torturing rather than more – always assuming of course that it really could be known that these were the alternatives, and that no indirect effects changed the balance of good and evil.

Scheffler takes this line, at least provisionally, because he does not see

that a "principled motivation" can be found for any other position. We are inclined to say that each person is responsible for his own actions as he is not responsible for those of others; but is this not just a way of stating the thesis that links a rational defence? A rationale is needed, he says, because "there is something paradoxical about the idea that it is impermissible to commit one act of an objectionable type in order to minimize acts of the very same type or other comparably objectionable events". One may wonder, however, whether Scheffler has not been over hasty in assuming that it must be paradoxical to refuse to commit one act of an objectionable kind to prevent others from committing more of these acts. It is not after all thought paradoxical that an act might be illegal even if it were done to prevent others from acting illegally. Laws apply to persons in that they forbid them to do certain things: no one suggests that it cannot be illegal to do what will minimize the number of illegal acts, and thus produce "the best state of affairs from a legal point of view". Perhaps morality differs from legality in this respect, but if so this will have to be shown, not assumed.

Nevertheless Scheffler's challenge must be taken very seriously, and it is one of the merits of this valuable book that it asks a question that must surely be answered. Its weakness lies in the form of the challenge, in so far as this is nothing more than the assertion that no one has yet produced a valid account of the moral limitations on consequentialist action. Scheffler thinks that we must be ready to modify some of our moral judgments because no rationale can be found for maintaining them; but only because he cannot find one does he think that one cannot be found.

FICTION

Pernicious daughter

Linda Taylor

ELIZABETH NORTH

Andent Enemies
230pp. Cape. £7.95.
0 224 02052 8

Elizabeth North began writing about female self-determination and independence in the late 1960s. Her early women, trapped by marriage, slowly started the climb out of familial claustrophobia; they stopped being merely wives, started getting themselves jobs, taking lovers, having divorces. "I have decided I may become an emergent woman", said Hannah Greeo in North's first novel. Like the author, these meta-morphosing creatures were blessed (or saddled) with children. Hope was invested in them, especially the daughters, and fourteen years later, these girls, weaned (at least metaphorically) on trains rather than dolls, are growing up. What will they do, they, make of their parents' struggle?

Petra Frohisher, aged sixteen – daughter of Alison (née Leadbetter, divorced Frohisher), step-daughter of Henry Harrison, half-sister of Daisy Harrison (aged six) – is the narrator and heroine of *Andent Enemies*. She's the archetypal post- Freudian child of the middle-class broken marriage. Sexually emancipated and knowing, she lives familiarly (if nervously) with a potential holocaust, the pill, drugs, abortions and gay liberation. "One life, one death", as Mr Forbes, her A-level English teacher, would say that Hardy was saying – "No reversal. What's done is done." Rational objectivity (or fatalism?) was one of the aims of North's early fables. Why, then, does Petra spend time as narrator in this novel working out why the much-warted – against Henry Harrison has walked out on Alison herself and Daisy? The answer, to some extent, lies in *King Lear* which Petra is studying along with *Far From the Modding Crowd*.

According to Mr Forbes, "It was being disappointed in his daughters and the crumbling structure of his life generally had sent Lear mad", and he sets his students an essay to write on "pernicious daughters". Petra never writes the essay (she has too many other things to worry about) but she does explore the problem. Secretly wanting to play Cordelia to Henry's Lear, Petra has been busy, for eight years, playing the other sisters' roles of vindictive ostracism. Henry's proud generosity, his wild good-humour, his godlike presence have been treated

with a step-daughter's steely antagonism, and have resulted in his "banishment". Teenage logies and swerves and plummets. Henry, at one minute the tragic old fool is, at the next, implicitly likened to Sergeant Troy – philanderer and runner. Petra is fascinated and appalled by his sword play. She also almost wants him back. The old order has shifted rather than changed; male vainglory, which once dominated, can now be battled with.

Elizabeth North's "message" is implied; her forte lies in the vernacular conversational tone of her story teller. Petra's retrospective analyses of herself, her family and her friends skip lightly and compulsively across the page. She is funny, acute, instant and vulnerable. She is also insular and self-obsessed, and the book loses something by her cosy introversion as narrator; there is insufficient distance from which to view her preoccupations and those of the people around her.

Though her language is cleverly recognizable, her thinking is limited, her feminism safe. Rejecting comic or tragic visions of life, she takes on board Henry's philosophy of "cock-up" and "conspiracy" theories. One result of this notion is that her horse, named Troy, (though not, entirely, for the obvious reason), runs away and ends up dead. (In place of Henry who will return, of course.) But the gesture has little resonance – no one minds enough; it's merely a cock-up.

Petra, in the end, is too vividly her vernacular self. One wants to know a great deal more about shadowy Alison, impossible Henry, precocious Daisy, tired Forbes – not to mention Lesbian Liz, druggie Bentley and messy Uncle Patrick. The next generation is making very little of all that late sixties hearache and resolve. God help feminism in the hands of Petra and co.

Sons in cells

Christopher Hawtree

MERVYN WALL

Hemitage
352pp. Dublin: Wolfhound Press.
£8.50 (paperback, £3.75).
0 903473 88 4

The publication of Mervyn Wall's first novel for almost thirty years is not an event that has excited much comment in Britain. This is a pity, for it makes an interesting, if not wholly successful, companion to the four novels he wrote in the ten years after the war. These

Sisterly succour

Tracey Warr

SANDI HALL

The Godmothers
183pp. The Women's Press. £3.50.
0 7043 3890 2

VALERIE MINER

Murder in the English Department
169pp. The Women's Press. £3.75.
0 7043 3890 4

The absorption of writers' theoretical beliefs into their work is often problematic. Virginia Woolf felt that the anger of Charlotte Brontë the woman tampered with the integrity of Charlotte Brontë the novelist, causing her books to be "deformed and twisted". Two new novels from The Women's Press, *The Godmothers* by Sandi Hall and *Murder in the English Department* by Valerie Miner, both attempt to incorporate feminist polemics into fiction. Like Brontë herself, Hall and Miner combine their political ideas with opping yarns. Hall's novel is a blend of science-fiction and thriller, and Miner's is a murder story.

The Godmothers is *The Godfather* transposed. It is a tale of lesbian feminist pacifism told with the panache of a Boy's Own adventure story. John Meredith comes to Toronto as part of a national network of American Vehicle Corporation employees who have been commissioned to do something about the threat that feminists pose to the status quo. Three lesbians – Lillian, Shirley and Darlene – belong to a feminist group in Toronto dedicated to fighting the "deliberate backlash against feminism". The women work with a co-operative effort and a pacific

ingenuity, exploiting their expertise in the information and communication fields. Meredith, on the other hand, employs a sinister back-up of business contacts and money, and ultimately resorts to violence. The plot rushes through kidnappings, office break-ins, buggings, and some smart detective work by the women, but culminates in Meredith's violent defeat of their efforts to expose the corrupt ethos of his company: he blows Darlene and injures Lillian. A second narrative, set in 2095 when the social system has been reconstructed after a nuclear war, alternates with the feminist thriller and presents parallels to the twentieth-century situation as well as progress from it.

Hall develops her double narrative with evocative self-innuity and daring. Her pacifism does not extend to her imaginative treatment of violence. The victimization and anger of women are the one which Lillian, our crowded bus, has her legs first groped and then slashed with a poisoned scalpel. The body. While the police and everyone else concentrate on the mystery of the murder, Miner is preoccupied with the mystery of the character of his murderer. Marjorie remains cool and disinclined to confession even after Nan has confronted her with the fact of her knowledge. Nan's decision to protect Marjorie results in her own arrest and trial for the murder.

Miner's writing, particularly her dialogue, is frequently too overtly laden with her feminist concerns, which are themselves often rehearsed on a usual level. Her style is detailed and lucid but rarely compelling and though her plot is dramatic enough she unfolds it with a pedestrian which is unfortunately appropriate to the theses that her heroine supervises.

I took my lips from hers. She had understood my thought; there was no reproach, only a faint underleaf of amethyst regret.

This kind of sentimental guff is also present in her descriptions of the relationships between women in her main narratives.

Valerie Miner's second novel, *Murder in the English Department*, is less radical in its ideas. Miner's heroine, Nan Weaver, has crept from a working-class background into a middle-class marriage, and then from that into a Professorship in Women's Studies at Berkeley. Nan's tenure is threatened by her outspoken feminist politics, especially her campaign against sexual harassment on the campus. A lecherous colleague, Angus Murchie, is found stabbed to death with his pants down and Nan is one of the few people in the University building who knew the murderer. She has, in fact, overheard Murchie attempting to rape her beautiful, sophisticated research student, Marjorie Adams, and found Murchie's blood-stained scarf by the body. While the police and everyone else concentrate on the mystery of the murder, Miner is preoccupied with the mystery of the character of his murderer. Marjorie remains cool and disinclined to confession even after Nan has confronted her with the fact of her knowledge. Nan's decision to protect Marjorie results in her own arrest and trial for the murder.

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The stuff of substance

Michael Woods

SARAH WATERLOW

Nature, Change, and Agency in Aristotle's Physics: A Philosophical Study
296pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £17.70
0 19 824633 6

Passage and Possibility: A Study of Aristotle's Modal Concepts
165pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £10.50.
0 19 824656 0

Sarah Waterlow's two studies of Aristotle are alike in combining a close and sensitive exegesis of certain important texts with an attempt to achieve an articulated and synoptic view of some of Aristotle's central philosophical doctrines. To both, Aristotle's metaphysical conception of natural substances plays a major role, and Dr Waterlow shows other parts of his natural philosophy as at once supporting and depending on that ontology.

In *Nature, Change and Agency*, she disentangles the various strands in Aristotle's view of a substance as possessing an "nature" or internal principle of change. Natural substances include living organisms (as against artefacts and accidentally composed objects), as well as the elementary bodies of Aristotle's physical system – fire, air, earth and water – whose change, if unimpeded, takes the form of movement towards their natural places. For organisms, natural, unforced change consists in development towards the substance's good, perfected state. Dr Waterlow shows that this general scheme could have been accepted without prejudging whether organic processes, subject to teleological explanation, are or are not wholly supervenient upon, or reducible to, the physical microstructure of bodies. That Aristotle rejects such positions reflects the fact that his arguments are, of course, directed against the forms of materialism with which he was familiar. The subsequent history of philosophy has obviously produced

more powerful challenges to the Aristotelian position.

This parvasively teleological view of change, despite the fact that the movements of the elementary bodies cannot easily be thought of as movements towards some optimal state, means, firstly, that all changes other than the natural ones must be seen as arising out of the interaction of natural substances changing in accordance with their internal nature. This consequence emerges clearly from Dr Waterlow's treatment of the definition of change in Book Three of the *Physics* as the "actuality of the potential *qua* potential" – a difficult passage that her discussion illumines greatly. Aristotle's treatment of change or process, though rooted in the locutions which are used to describe the changes that familiar objects undergo, makes it a highly theoretical concept, as, in accordance with Aristotle's metaphysical preconceptions, the very identification of a process as of a certain kind requires that it be seen as leading, in an inherently self-terminating way, towards a terminus fixed by the nature of the subject of the change. Secondly, an ordinary change, like the movement of a stone when deflected by an external force, fails to qualify as an Aristotelian *kinesis* at all, since the terminus can only be discovered *ex post facto*. (She also examines the rather different account of change in Book Six of the *Physics*, and finds it less metaphysically loaded, but open to objections of a technical kind.)

The general picture of natural substances as having an inner principle which determines the changes they will display in the presence of appropriate external conditions is complicated by Aristotle's insistence that anything that changes is always changed by something – something distinct from the subject of the change, which originates change without changing itself. Dr Waterlow grapples impressively with these difficulties, in making sense of these difficulties, in the case of the elementary bodies. Aristotle can save the thesis that there is always a distinct source of change by identifying its source with what triggered it off by removing an obstacle; but in the case of organic substances, Aristotle insists that, despite the distinctions requirement,

we have examples of things that change themselves: their complexity supplies a basis for distinguishing agent and patient within them. But Dr Waterlow holds that Aristotle's fundamental reason for introducing the concept of self-change at all lies in his preoccupation with the source of change in the universe as a whole. The last part of the book is devoted to the argument of Book Eight of the *Physics*. How does Aristotle justify the postulation of a further cause of the eternal motion of the *primum mobile*, instead of conceiving of the latter as moving by an internal principle, like the elementary bodies, but without the possibility of external hindrance? Some have seen the introduction of the unmoved mover here as simply a manifestation of Aristotle's theological preconceptions, but Dr Waterlow interestingly claims that the conception of a *kinesis* that was developed for the subuniverse permits the rotation of the *primum mobile* to be regarded as one only if it is moved in turn by a separate eternal agent.

In *Passage and Possibility*, Dr Waterlow examines Aristotle's modal concepts, and, in particular, his apparent readiness to accept two connected but highly counter-intuitive principles: first, that if something is possible, it will at some time come about, and second, that what is always the case, is so necessarily. Here the main texts are Chapter Twelve of Book One of the *De Caelo* and the celebrated passage in the *De Interpretatione* in which Aristotle discusses the contingency of a future event like tomorrow's sea battle. Apart from being highly counter-intuitive, the two principles are implicitly denied by Aristotle in a number of passages, including the passage in the *De Interpretatione* just mentioned. Jaakko Hintikka, and other recent writers on this subject, have held that the two bizarre principles were accepted by Aristotle only in a severely qualified form; but a satisfactory interpretation must explain his acceptance of them in this form, and the restrictions on their application. Dr Waterlow argues convincingly that there was no question of Aristotle's *ad hoc* redefining general propositions to temporary qualifications; rather, he had a qualified acceptance of the two principles, and a metaphysical doctrine that explains

and limit the range of application of the principles so as to secure consistency with the contrast that he, and everyone else, makes between truth and necessity on the one hand, and between falsehood and impossibility on the other. There is thus no need to see Aristotle as arriving at his position as a result of some more or less gross logical error, like confusion of the scope of a modal operator.

Dr Waterlow argues that what is fundamental for Aristotle is what is possible, at a given time, relative to the actual state of affairs at that time: some proposition *p*, that is false at a time *t*, may yet be possible if it is possible for *t* to be true or some later time, given the way the world is at *t*. Thus modality changes over time, and, in particular, *p*'s being the case at *t* will be either necessary or impossible then, even if it was a contingent matter earlier. However, some propositions are never contingent, because at no time is their truth compatible with the possibilities that the world contains. This conception of necessity and possibility locates it in the actual world; what conflicts with the natural necessities that the world displays is impossible for Aristotle, though a philosopher in the contemporary neo-Leibnizian tradition might deny this on the ground that another possible world might manifest different regularities. Thus, in her view, Aristotle's conception of necessity is crucially different from the logical or metaphysical necessity that figures in much contemporary philosophy (despite the recognizably Aristotelian inspiration of some of it).

Using this concept of possibility – relative to what is actually the case at a given time – Dr Waterlow analyses the puzzling argument, in the *De Caelo*, that what is always exists is incapable of coming to be or passing away. She finds the key to this in Aristotle's conception of capacities: these have been said to include in their specification some maximum (that limits their exercise (just as the capacity to lift a weight must always have an inherent upper limit)). If this is generalized to include the capacities substances have for possessing or lacking properties falling under their categories, Aristotle is in a position to derive the two contentious principles: since anything that has the capacity for being *F* and also the capacity for being not-*F* will eventually

cease to exercise the one and exercise the other. What has the capacity for ceasing to exist will eventually do so, but its manner of doing so is not determined in advance, nor when it will happen.

These strong claims about capacities, and in particular the belief that negative, no less than positive, capacities have inbuilt temporal limits, would not be seriously defended today. But Dr Waterlow makes out a strong case for her view that "the idea of capacities having intrinsic maximum duration is essential to the metaphysical theory of change in a universe of Aristotelian substance". Thus Aristotle's qualified acceptance of the "Principle of Plenitude" is not a result of logical ineptitude, but a reflection of his systematic metaphysics of substance and change.

In accordance with this view of Aristotelian modality, the idea that in the *De Interpretatione* Aristotle denies a truth-value to future contingent propositions is rejected. The most interesting part of Dr Waterlow's treatment of that much-discussed chapter is her suggestion, which perhaps requires more defence and elaboration than she gives it, that Aristotle says that, in such cases, the denial be true or false; he is concerned to deny that the falsehood of one member of such an affirmation-denial pair follows from the truth of the other. Aristotle is here, she claims, operating with a naive notion of falsehood that is coloured by the original connection of the Greek word with error or deception, and though that the contingency of some future events could be preserved only if it is allowed that "someone's assertion about the future which turns out to be true need not have been false in the sense just mentioned; at this time it was made."

Dr Waterlow's two modalities interest, by everyone who who understands the central ideas of Aristotle's philosophy of nature, combines philosophical sophistication with an enviable ability to make texts in a perspicuous and lively way, and they will stimulate interest for a long time to come.

Brothers in bedlam

Anthony Dellus

CHRISTOPHER HOPE

Private Parts and Other Tales
174pp. £6.95.
0 7100 9346 2

A Separate Development

180pp. £6.95.
0 7100 0954 2
Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Until recently South Africa's literary protests against apartheid have tended to be solemn if not dull. But there has also been from quite early on in the country's literature another, less morally gloomy, vein of comment on its social predicament. It may be said to have originated with Roy Campbell's *Yald Elogio*, though this poet's satire later became concentrated on English sexual habits. It emerged again in another form in the prose tales of Herman Charles Bosman, whose story, "The Yellow Dog", is a superb brief satire on racial antagonism. But for a while humour in this field seemed to dry up. Tom Sharpe's early books, *My Kaffir* and *My Kaffir's Kaffir*, were a product of satire, but he was not a comedian. Now, however, Christopher Hope, a talented South African-born poet, has taken to prose writing an embittered view of the

painfully funny side of apartheid.

His novel, *A Separate Development*, which was published last year, was awarded the David Higham Memorial prize. It is the story of a young man of dubious colour, neither black nor white, not even identifiable with any certainty as a "coloured". He lives first among the whites, as a student at an expensive Catholic college; then among the blacks, initially as an Indian tailor's runner and later as a tray-collector at an all-night hot-dog park, where he sees too much of white girls coupling with their boy-friends in cars for the good of his job; and he finally winds up in Security Headquarters charged with racial rape and writing the story of his life as a "statement" for Boss in a desperate attempt to save his testicles from a further application of the electric shock-machine.

One of the themes of the novel is that however innocuous, as a South African attempts to make himself, he will never escape the attentions of the Security Police. They are to be all-seeing male nurses in the madhouse, which South Africa is increasingly becoming, a bedlam in which everybody from liberal whites and Nationalist cabinet ministers to Catholic teaching brothers and subjective black gangsters is going mad. In the end, in charge of all the

Huddleston's *Naught for Your Comfort* and Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* to increase his knowledge of the more subtle threats to party and country.

In his new book of short stories, *Private Parts*, Hope carries his readers further into the sunlit realms of South African dementia. The whites are shown becoming more fixed in their crazed attitudes and the blacks react more hopelessly to them. In "Noble's People", a little black priest has gone quietly mad in an attempt to challenge the white community out of its racial prejudice by ministering to them as if the situation was absolutely normal. He finally spends his time making strange, papier-mâché figures of his parishioners and populating the church garden with them. Perhaps the most forbidding preview of what the policy of apartheid is accomplishing for blacks and whites is given in "Learning to Fly", where the toughest victim of police torture, turns up, after the revolution as the chief torturer himself.

No doubt the contemplation of apartheid and its effects still fills Hope with savage and hair-raising comic inventiveness. Yet his latest work seems to state even harder both to be funny and to evoke horror. The effect is to create a feeling of sinking into an underworld of caldied demons.

to reach Yeats's funeral. This novel, coherently suggesting chaos, is Wall's masterpiece (bizarrely, it won a Danish award for the best European novel of its year). It managed to evoke the larger problems surrounding daily life without becoming pretentious or tedious.

Wall eventually escaped from the Civil Service to join Radio Eireann before moving on to the Irish Arts Council in 1957. In the previous year he had published *No Trophies Rose*, a novel which again examines the gulf between artistic and commercial life, symbolized rather implausibly by an obscure philosopher immured in the Civil Service and by a pig-will business. Since then Mervyn Wall, unlike some of his British counterparts, appears to have found himself too preoccupied to produce much of his own work.

In *Leaves for the Burning* the treatment of Ireland extends beyond its setting in 1939. Similarly, Wall's first novels, *The Unfortunate Pursey* and its sequel, *The Return of Pursey*, though set in the Dark Ages, contain contemporary material. They describe the picaresque adventures of a simple-minded monk with a speech impediment who is ejected from his monastery for being an unwitting prey for the Devil and his cohorts. The novels abound with spirits, vampires, poltergeists and magical happenings, but the fantasy is inspired by a keenly realistic, cynically whimsical. Continually falling foul of the authorities, Pursey learns to realize that wherever there was strong religious conviction there was blood-letting and oppression.

Such notions fill *Hemitage*. Wall writes here in a manner considerably different from his earlier novels, the satire and comical devices largely subordinated to the blunt narrative of a popular family saga. Irish history this century forms a background to this story which has the familiar figures of so arid a life: son, tyrannical father (and well-meaning, powerless mother). Unexpected deaths adorn the novel, which is deftly by the journal of an alcoholic "old man" (Tony Langton) being an years' past, a scene of a man's mysterious murder, the death of a woman who has been a

end. The journal, intended as a self-exploratory, cathartic memoir written with the prison-doctor's encouragement, surveys "the debris of a life" whose aspirations have been thwarted by his parents' delusion of class and, it becomes clear, by a fate that has put him in Ireland. All this has none of the self-indulgence of therapy but progresses at a steady rate with only a few quick jumps forward in time and some returns to the cell where it is composed. Pursey found that "in Ireland anything may happen to anyone anywhere and at any time, and it usually does". Langton, too, discovers this in the course of his generally mundane life.

"The lads are a bit afraid of a man that's done somebody. Killers are what you might call the poison aristocracy", one old lad tells Langton. It is an ironic role for a man who throughout his life has been made only too aware of his upper-middle-class status, one who would have had his dead father, who did not like even to talk with business people, spluttering with rage. Philistine, but wanting a veneer of culture, the father had made Langton learn the piano; the difficulty which he finds in reaching F with his third finger in the scale of C and his father's pipe-smacking anger makes a vignette worthy almost of Samuel Butler.

Hemitage is an oddly conventional novel, but, if it is at times a little pedestrian, it is not without its compelling elements. Mervyn Wall devotes many pages, again to the provincial, Civil Service – everyone lives in dread of being, killed, to Derravoher – but they do not have the force of *Leaves for the Burning*. "When was human behaviour anything but a laugh?" asks a character. It is the unsettling of this quality that makes this novel not as effective as its predecessor which deserves to be made available again to a wider public.

In her novel *The Prisoner of the Journeyman*, Press, £2.95 (0 904726 33 3), which describes the frustration and distress of the imprisoned, the physically disabled and the elderly, Arrowood has made significant use of his own experience as a social worker, and a novelist, and a

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547, 549, 551, 553, 555, 557, 559, 561, 563, 565, 567, 569, 571, 573, 575, 577, 579, 581, 583, 585, 587, 589, 591, 593, 595, 597, 599, 601, 603, 605, 607, 609, 611, 613, 615, 617, 619, 621, 623, 625, 627, 629, 631, 633, 635, 637, 639, 641, 643, 645, 647, 649, 651, 653, 655, 657, 659, 661, 663, 665, 667, 669, 671, 673, 675, 677, 679, 681, 683, 685, 687, 689, 691, 693, 695, 697, 699, 701, 703, 705, 707, 709, 711, 713, 715, 717, 719, 721, 723, 725, 727, 729, 731, 733, 735, 737, 739, 741, 743, 745, 747, 749, 751, 753, 755, 757, 759, 761, 763, 765, 767, 769, 771, 773, 775, 777, 779, 781, 783, 785, 787, 789, 791, 793, 795, 797, 799, 801, 803, 805, 807, 809, 811, 813, 815, 817, 819, 821, 823, 825, 827, 829, 831, 833, 835, 837, 839, 841, 843, 845, 847, 849, 851, 853, 855, 857, 859, 861, 863, 865, 867, 869, 871, 873, 875, 877, 879, 881, 883, 885, 887, 889, 891, 893, 895, 897, 899, 901, 903, 905, 907, 909, 911, 913, 915, 917, 919, 921, 923, 925, 927, 929, 931, 933, 935, 937, 939, 941, 943, 945, 947, 949, 951, 953, 955, 957, 959, 961, 963, 965, 967, 969, 971, 973, 975, 977, 979, 981, 983, 985, 987, 989, 991, 993, 995, 997, 999, 1001, 1003, 1005, 1007, 1009, 1011, 1013, 1015, 1017, 1019, 1021, 1023, 1025, 1027, 1029, 1031, 1033, 1035, 1037, 1039, 1041, 1043, 1045, 1047, 1049, 1051, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1059, 1061, 1063, 1065, 1067, 1069, 1071, 1073, 1075, 1077, 1079, 1081, 1083, 1085, 1087, 1089, 1091, 1093, 1095, 1097, 1099, 1101, 1103, 1105, 1107, 1109, 1111, 1113, 1115, 1117, 1119, 1121, 1123, 1125, 1127, 1129, 1131, 1133, 1135, 1137, 1139, 1141, 1143, 1145, 1147, 1149, 1151, 1153, 1155, 1157, 1159, 1161, 1163, 1165, 1167, 1169, 1171, 1173, 1175, 1177, 1179, 1181, 1183, 1185, 1187, 1189, 1191, 1193, 1195, 1197, 1199, 1201, 1203, 1205, 1207, 1209, 1211, 1213, 1215, 1217, 1219, 1221, 1223, 1225, 1227, 1229, 1231, 1233, 1235, 1237, 1239, 1241, 1243, 1245, 1247, 1249, 1251, 1253, 1255, 1257, 1259, 1261, 1263, 1265, 1267, 1269, 1271, 1273, 1275, 1277, 1279, 1281, 1283, 1285, 1287, 1289, 1291, 1293, 1295, 1297, 1299, 1301, 1303, 1305, 1307, 1309, 1311, 1313, 1315, 1317, 1319, 1321, 1323, 1325, 1327, 1329, 1331, 1333, 1335, 1337, 1339, 1341, 1343, 1345, 1347, 1349, 1351, 1353, 1355, 1357, 1359, 1361, 1363, 1365, 1367, 1369, 1371, 1373, 1375, 1377, 1379, 1381, 1383, 1385, 1387, 1389, 1391, 1393, 1395, 1397, 1399, 1401, 1403, 1405, 1407, 1409, 1411, 1413, 1415, 1417, 1419, 1421, 1423, 1425, 1427, 1429, 1431, 1433, 1435, 1437, 1439, 1441, 1443, 1445, 1447, 1449, 1451, 1453, 1455, 1457, 1459, 1461, 1463, 1465, 1467, 1469, 1471, 1473, 1475, 1477, 1479, 1481, 1483, 1485, 1487, 1489, 1491, 1493, 1495, 1497, 1499, 1501, 1503, 1505, 1507, 1509, 1511, 1513, 1515, 1517, 1519, 1521, 1523, 1525, 1527, 1529, 1531, 1533, 1535, 1537, 1539, 1541, 1543, 1545, 1547, 1549, 1551, 1553, 1555, 1557, 1559, 1561, 1563, 1565, 1567, 1569, 1571, 1573, 1575, 1577, 1579, 1581, 1583, 1585, 1587, 1589, 1591, 1593, 1595, 1597, 1599, 1601, 1603, 1605, 1607, 1609, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1617, 1619, 1621, 1623, 1625, 1627, 1629, 1631, 1633, 1635, 1637, 1639, 1641, 1643, 1645, 1647, 1649, 1651, 1653, 1655, 1657, 1659, 1661, 1663, 1665, 1667, 1669, 1671, 1673, 1675, 1677, 1679, 1681, 1683, 1685, 1687, 1689, 1691, 1693, 1695, 1697, 1699, 1701, 1703, 1705, 1707, 1709, 1711, 1713, 1715, 1717, 1719, 1721, 1723, 1725, 1727, 1729, 1731, 1733, 1735, 1737, 1739, 1741, 1743, 1745, 1747, 1749, 1751, 1753, 1755, 1757, 1759, 1761, 1763, 1765, 1767, 1769, 1771, 1773, 1775, 1777, 1779, 1781, 1783, 1785, 1787, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1795, 1797, 1799, 1801, 1803, 1805, 1807, 1809, 1811, 1813, 1815, 1817, 1819, 1821, 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829, 1831, 1833, 1835, 1837, 1839, 1841, 1843, 1845, 1847, 1849, 1851, 1853, 1855, 1857, 1859, 1861, 1863, 1865, 1867, 1869, 1871, 1873, 1875, 1877, 1879, 1881, 1883, 1885, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1893, 1895, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1921, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1933, 1935, 1937, 1939, 1941, 1943, 1945, 1947, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025, 2027, 2029, 2031, 2033, 2035, 2037, 2039, 2041, 2043, 2045, 2047, 2049, 2051, 2053, 2055, 2057, 2059, 2061, 2063, 2065, 2067, 2069, 2071, 2073, 2075, 2077, 2079, 2081, 2083, 2085, 2087, 2089, 2091, 2093, 2095, 2097, 2099, 2101, 2103, 2105, 2107, 2109, 2111, 2113, 2115, 2117, 2119, 2121, 2123, 2125, 2127, 2129, 2131, 2133, 2135, 2137, 2139, 2141, 2143, 2145, 2147, 2149, 2151, 2153, 2155, 2157, 2159, 2161, 2163, 2165, 2167, 2169, 2171, 2173, 2175, 2177, 2179, 2181, 2183, 2185, 2187, 2189, 2191, 2193, 2195, 2197, 2199, 2201, 2203, 2205, 2207, 2209, 2211, 2213, 2215, 2217, 2219, 2221, 2223, 2225, 2227, 2229, 2231, 2233, 2235, 2237, 2239, 2241, 2243, 2245, 2247, 2249, 2251, 2253, 2255, 2257, 2259, 2261, 2263, 2265, 2267, 2269, 2271, 2273, 2275, 2277, 2279, 2281, 2283, 2285, 2287, 2289, 2291, 2293, 2295, 2297, 2299, 2301, 2303, 2305, 2307, 2309, 2311, 2313, 2315, 2317, 2319, 2321, 2323, 2325, 2327, 2329, 2331, 2333, 2335, 2337, 2339, 2341, 2343, 2345, 2347, 2349, 2351, 2353, 2355, 2357, 2359, 2361, 2363, 2365, 2367, 2369, 2371, 2373, 2375, 2377, 2379, 2381, 2383, 2385, 2387, 2389, 2391, 2393, 2395, 2397, 2399, 2401, 2403, 2405, 2407, 2409, 2411, 2413, 2415, 2417, 2419, 2421, 2423, 2425, 2427, 2429, 2431, 2433, 2435, 2437, 2439, 2441, 2443, 2445, 2447, 2449, 2451, 2453, 2455, 2457, 2459, 2461, 2463, 2465, 2467, 2469, 2471, 2473, 2475, 2477, 2479, 2481, 2483, 2485, 2487, 2489, 2491, 2493, 2495, 2497, 2499, 2501, 2503, 2505, 2507, 2509, 2511, 2513, 2515, 2517, 2519, 2521, 2523, 2525, 2527, 2529, 2531, 2533, 2535, 2537, 2539, 2541, 2543, 2545, 2547, 2549, 2551, 2553, 2555, 2557, 2559, 2561, 2563, 2565, 2567, 2569, 2571, 2573, 2575, 2577, 2579, 2581, 2583, 2585, 2587, 2589, 2591, 2593, 2595, 2597, 2599, 2601, 2603, 2605, 2607, 2609, 2611, 2613, 2615, 2617, 2619, 2621, 2623, 2625, 2627, 2629, 2631, 2633, 2635, 2637, 2639, 2641, 2643, 2645, 2647, 2649, 2651, 2653, 2655, 2657, 2659, 2661, 2663, 2665, 2667, 2669, 2671, 2673, 2675, 2677, 2679, 2681, 2683, 2685, 2687, 2689, 2691, 2693, 2695, 2697, 2699, 2701, 2703, 2705, 2707, 2709, 2711, 2713, 2715, 2717, 2719, 2721, 2723, 2725, 2727, 2729, 2731, 2733, 2735, 2737, 2739, 2741, 2743, 2745, 2747, 2749, 2751, 2753, 2755, 2757, 2759, 2761, 2763, 2765, 2767, 2769, 2771, 2773, 2775, 2777, 2779, 2781, 2783, 2785, 2787, 2789, 2791, 2793, 2795, 2797, 2799, 2801, 2803, 2805, 2807, 2809, 2811, 2813, 2815, 2817, 2819, 2821, 2823, 2825, 2827, 2829, 2831, 2833, 2835, 2837, 2839, 2841, 2843, 2845, 2847, 2849, 2851, 2853, 2855, 2857, 2859, 2861, 2863, 2865, 2867, 2869, 2871, 2873, 2875, 2877, 2879, 2881, 2883, 2885, 2887, 2889, 2891, 2893, 2895, 2897, 2899, 2901, 2903, 2905, 2907, 2909, 2911, 2913, 2915, 2917, 2919, 2921, 2923, 2925, 2927, 2929, 2931, 2933, 2935, 2937, 2939, 2941, 2943, 2945, 2947, 2949, 2951, 2953, 2955, 2957, 2959, 2961, 2963, 2965, 2967, 2969, 2971, 2973, 2975, 2977, 2979, 2981, 2983, 2985, 2987, 2989, 2991, 2993, 2995, 2997, 2999, 3001, 3003, 3005, 3007, 3009, 3011, 3013, 3015, 3017, 3019, 3021, 3023, 3025, 3027, 3029, 3031, 3033, 3035, 3037, 3039, 3041, 3043, 3045, 3047, 3049, 3051, 3053, 3055, 3057, 3059, 3061, 3063, 3065, 3067, 3069, 3071, 3073, 3075, 3077, 3079, 3081, 3083, 3085, 3087, 3089, 3091, 3093, 3095, 3097, 3099, 3101, 3103, 3105, 3107, 3109, 3111, 3113, 3115, 3117, 3119, 3121, 3123, 3125, 3127, 3129, 3131, 3133, 3135, 3137, 3139, 3141, 3143, 3145, 3147, 3149, 3151, 3153, 3155, 3157, 3159, 3161, 3163, 3165, 3167, 3169, 3171, 3173, 3175, 3177, 3179, 3181, 3183, 3185, 3187, 3189, 3191, 3193, 3195, 3197, 3199, 3201, 3203, 3205, 3207, 3209, 3211, 3213, 3215, 3217, 3219, 3221, 3223, 3225, 3227, 3229, 3231, 3233, 3235, 3237, 3239, 3241, 3243, 3245, 3247, 3249, 3251, 3253, 3255, 3257, 3259, 3261, 3263, 3265, 3267, 3269, 3271, 3273, 3275, 3277, 3279, 3281, 3283, 3285, 3287, 3289, 3291, 3293, 3295, 3297, 3299, 3301, 3303, 3305, 3307, 3309, 3311, 3313, 3315, 3317, 3319, 3321, 3323, 3325, 3327, 3329, 3331, 3333, 3335, 3337, 3339, 3341, 3343, 3345, 3347, 3349, 3351, 3353, 3355, 3357, 3359, 3361, 3363, 3365, 3367, 3369, 3371, 3373, 3375, 3377, 3379, 3381, 3383, 3385, 3387, 3389, 3391, 3393, 3395, 3397, 3399, 3401, 3403, 3405, 3407, 3409, 3411, 3413, 3415, 3417, 3419, 3421, 3423, 3425, 3427, 3429, 3431, 3433, 3435, 3437, 3439, 3441, 3443, 3445, 3447, 3449, 3451, 3453, 3455, 3457, 3459, 3461, 3463, 3465, 3467, 3469, 3471, 3473, 3475, 3477, 3479, 3481, 3483, 3485, 3487, 3489, 3491, 3493, 3495, 3497, 3499, 3501, 3503, 3505, 3507, 3509, 3511, 3513, 3515, 3517, 3519, 3521, 3523, 3525, 3527, 3529, 3531, 3533, 3535, 3537, 3539, 3541, 3543, 3545, 3547, 3549, 3551, 3553, 3555, 3557, 3559, 3561, 3563, 3565, 3567, 3569, 3571, 3573, 3575, 3577, 3579, 3581, 3583, 3585, 3587, 3589, 3591, 3593, 3595, 3597, 3599, 3601, 3603, 3605, 3607, 3609, 3611, 3613, 3615, 3617, 3619, 3621, 3623, 3625, 3627, 3629, 3631, 3633, 3635, 3637, 3639, 3641, 3643, 3645, 3647, 3649, 3651, 3653, 3655, 3657, 3659, 3661, 3663, 3665, 3667, 3669, 3671, 3673, 3675, 3677, 3679, 3681, 3683, 3685, 3687, 3689, 3691, 3693, 3695, 3697, 3699, 3701, 3703, 3705, 3707, 3709, 3711, 3713, 3715, 3717, 3719, 3721, 3723, 3725, 3727, 3729, 3731, 3733, 3735, 3737, 3739, 3741, 3743, 3745, 3747, 3749, 3751, 3753, 3755, 3757, 3759, 3761, 3763, 3765, 3767, 3769, 3771, 3773, 3775, 3777, 3779, 3781, 3783, 3785, 3787, 3789, 3791, 3793, 3795, 3797, 3799, 3801, 3803, 3805, 3807, 3809, 3811, 3813, 3815, 3817, 3819, 3821, 3823, 3825, 3827, 3829, 3831, 3833, 3835, 3837, 3839, 3841, 3843, 3845, 3847, 3849, 3851, 3853, 3855, 3857, 3859, 3861, 3863, 3865, 3867, 3869, 3871, 3873, 3875, 3877, 3879, 3881, 3883, 3885, 3887, 3889, 3891, 3893, 3895, 3897, 3899, 3901, 3903, 3905, 3907, 3909, 3911, 3913, 3915, 3917, 3919, 3921, 3923, 3925, 3927, 3929, 3931, 3933, 3935, 3937, 3939, 3941, 3943, 3945, 3947, 3949, 3951, 3953, 3955, 3957, 3959, 3961, 3963, 3965, 3967, 3969, 3971, 3973, 3975, 3977, 3979, 3981, 3983, 3985, 3987, 3989, 3991, 3993, 3995, 3997, 3999, 4001, 4003, 4005, 4007, 4009, 4011, 4013, 4015, 4017, 4019, 4021, 4023, 4025, 4027, 4029, 4031, 4033, 4035, 4037, 4039, 4041, 4043, 4045, 4047, 4049, 4051, 4053, 4055, 4057, 4059, 4061, 4063, 4065, 4067, 4069, 4071, 4073, 4075, 4077, 4079, 4081, 4083, 4085, 4087, 4089, 4091, 4093, 4095, 4097, 4099, 4101, 4103, 4105, 4107, 4109, 4111, 4113, 4115, 4117, 4119, 4121, 4123, 4125, 4127, 4129, 4131, 4133, 4135, 4137, 4139, 4141, 4143, 4145, 4147, 4149, 4151, 4153, 4155, 4157, 4159, 4161, 4163, 4165, 4167, 4169, 4171, 4173, 4175, 4177, 4179, 4181, 4183, 418